

ESSAYS IN CELEBRATION OF THE CISRS SILVER JUBILEE

Edited by Saral K. Chatterji



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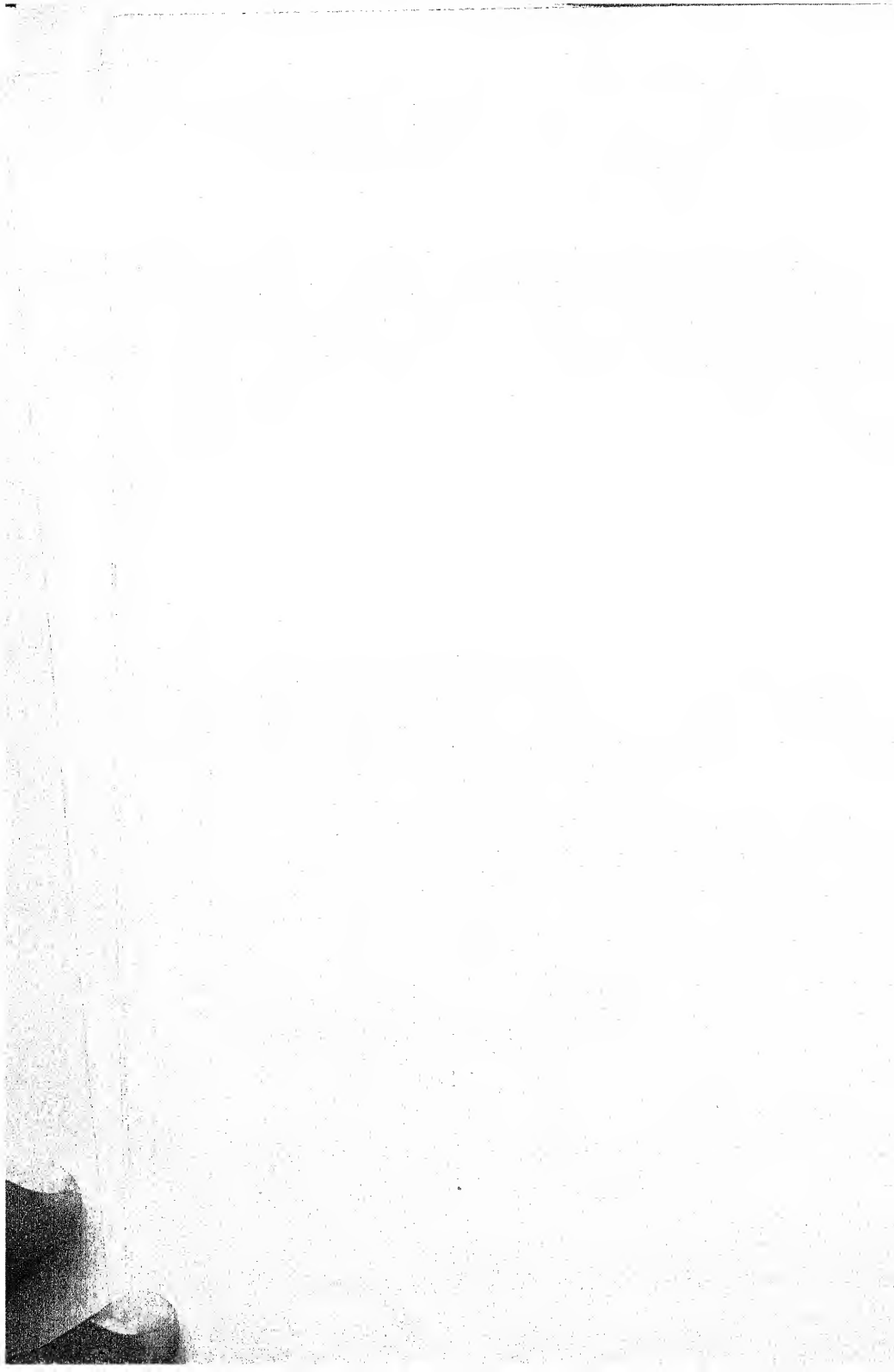
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INTRODUCTION

In the course of the last twenty-five years the concerns of the CISRS have both broadened and become more concrete. It is possible, in fact, to discern a line of development in its thinking and activities since it was founded in 1957. It would, however, be incorrect to assume that this development has always been characterised by homogeneity either of people or of ideas. Both, the contributions and those who made them have been diverse and varied, each bringing his or her background, experience and ability into the life of the CISRS. This is truer of the period since the mid-sixties, and much more so today, than the early years of its existence. But the vision and wisdom of the founders and leaders of the CISRS succeeded in developing an ethos, a perspective, an intellectual and spiritual climate which could accept the heterogeneous inputs of people with diverse experiences and life-situations and bring all of them to the service of the people. Whether in the study of religion or in dialogue, social research of theology, action programmes or action-related studies, women's concerns or the concern for the weaker sections in general, this diversity of approach and methodology is quite evident. The foundation, the rock, which sustains the CISRS has many mansions; different faiths, ideologies, traditions and consciousness of history have strengthened the common thread running through all activities of the CISRS—the emphasis on the liberation of the people.

Among those who were instrumental in bringing to a head this movement for the study of religion and society were persons largely rejected or ignored by the Church, who knew they had to be involved in the study of society from the point of view of transformation and a Christian understanding of it. It was a matter of their socio-political identity as well as of Christian participation in the politics of humanisation. Others came to lead this movement from their concern for the study of religion, particularly Hinduism in its renascent form, and the religious movements of the people. They considered their concern to be of vital importance to the other, specially in understanding the spiritual basis of socio-political change and reconstruction.



Among the concerns the CISRS had in the early years of its existence the dominant ones related to the questions that were exercising the minds of the people at that time including socially and politically conscious Christians, namely, nation-building, democracy, socialism, the secular state, nationalism, development, etc. A resurgent Hinduism undergirding some of these post-colonial movements made it important not only to study it but also to dialogue with it in order to discover the basis of a common humanity and a human community.

In theology, the major concern of the CISRS has been Indian Christian Theology and two of the publication series are devoted to this concern. Speaking of the theological task in India an earlier publication observes that the received formulations "are valuable to us here in India precisely in the measure in which the Indian Church seeks to confess Christ in the context of the thought-forms and life situations of its own setting". In this task perhaps the emphasis was given more to Indian thought forms than to life-situations, particularly of the oppressed sections. But, along with the socio-political and religious concerns, this attempt made the contribution of the CISRS unique in the life of the Church in this country.

When the time came to look beyond, and probably below, the general concepts to the more concrete realities of the country, the foundations laid in the earlier years proved to be capable of meeting the new intellectual and programmatic challenges of the changing times. The optimism about nation-building, democracy, development, etc. gradually gave place to a certain amount of disillusionment. The outlines of economic stagnation, caste-class oppression and authoritarianism became visible through the fog of generalities and abstraction. In tune with the march of events in the nation, during mid-sixties and the latter half of the decade, the CISRS concerns became more sharply focused on social, political and economic structures. The aspirations and the struggles of the people for change and social justice, study programme on national legislation and national issues, political development and experiments (e.g. coalition governments) and other concrete issues began to feature prominently. This trend was later developed into the major concern in the Institute's study program-

mes for social action at the grass-roots level, caste-class issues, and the women's concerns.

In the study of religion as well as Indian Christian theology the perspectives came to rest on the aspirations and life situations of the weaker sections. The study programme on religion after completing a major research on the religious beliefs and symbols of the people within Hinduism is now concentrating on the interdependence between religion and the structural factors in society—caste and class, economic and social factors which interact with religious beliefs and values—and in the process discovering religion through the eyes of the poor and the oppressed.

This concentration on the concrete and orientation towards the weaker sections in social analysis and study of religion are to be seen also in the Institute's particular thrusts in the field of Indian Christian theology. While the importance given to research on Indian Christian thought remains unchanged, the search for indigenous ingredients for theological reflection from the experience and history of the people in this country has begun. Several issues of the institute's quarterly journal, *Religion and Society*, have been devoted to this search. This is an attempt at theological reflection in which the experience of the diverse sections of the people of their concrete life-situations find a central place.

A related concern is for the Church in India. The CISRS has as one of its objectives the education of the members of the Churches in the issues of society and religion. Such an education, however, leads to a close examination of Indian ecclesiology. It turns out in the final analysis to be an education of the Churches in this country in the nature of the Church itself. The CISRS is required to go beyond such theological cliches as 'the whole people of God' (meaning of course the people in the churches) and see the relationship of Jesus Christ with the people of a poor, oppressive, and pluralistic society.

Studies and programmes on women's concerns, developed during the latter half of the seventies, have likewise concentrated on specific weaker sections among women and on discovering a common ground for the participation of women from all levels. It appears from our studies and experience in programmes that the

latter, forging a common ground, is not an easy task. The socio-economic differences among women of the various sections are too great to allow a spontaneous common movement of women of all levels. One of the objectives of study and research on women's concerns has been to search for communalities while taking the diversities seriously.

A distinctive feature in the Institute's thinking on social analysis has been the emphasis on the caste-class combination as the key to the dynamics of society. Under this are subsumed social, cultural, economic and ethnic factors. Over the years a number of studies on these factors have been made. However, a more adequate theoretical understanding of this nexus is yet to emerge. This is a task for the Institute in the coming years.

Finally, studies and research cannot be separated from practice and action. This has been one of the major lessons of the first twenty-five years of the CISRS. The perception of social reality, crucial for the study both of society and religion as well as for theological reflection, becomes more concrete and complete when it is related to action. The understanding of the interrelationship between the two may still be a little vague but some of us have considered this to be an important objective.

This volume which is being published on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the CISRS presents some of the foregoing concerns. In the coming years these will be given greater attention and this publication is a preparation for that task. It is thus both a commemoration of what has happened in the life of the Institute and an anticipation of what is likely to be as it moves into the near future. The contributors to this volume are old friends, associates, and staff of the CISRS. We are grateful to them for their willingness to write on the concerns of the Institute on this occasion of its Silver Jubilee.

SARAL K. CHATTERJI
Director

USE OF TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS FOR ATTAINING MODERN AIMS

Y. B. DAMLE

Most of the new nations in South Asia which were able to shake off colonial rule find themselves in the same predicament. They are consumed by the urge for overall development and modernisation and, at the same time faced by the erstwhile traditional and colonial structures aggravated by poverty. It is true that in order to understand any society, it is necessary to dwell deep into its history. However, the attainment of Independence provides a useful cut-off point for the analysis of society in the case of India. In a way, it could be maintained that the present is shaped both by the past and the aspirations which people have about their future. There is a dialectic between the past and the future which shapes the present. In the case of India, the attainment of Independence provides a very useful cut-off point largely because of the framing and adoption of the Constitution which reflects the image of society which India would like to be. The Constitution symbolises the ideal society to be realised by suitable efforts. It was pointed out earlier that most of these new nations have been afflicted by poverty as well as by colonial rule. In the case of India, however, due to the development of modern education coupled with political and national consciousness, a good deal of thought was given to develop Indian society along the path of modernisation without unduly impairing the strength of its long tradition. And yet it is obvious that this desire to transform Indian society into a prosperous, socially just and equitable as well as modern society, gathered momentum only after Independence since without political independence proper measures towards that end could not be adopted. In a nutshell, one can say that the Indian Constitution provides a blue-print for transforming Indian society into an ideal society where there would be ample opportunity for everyone to realise one's best potentialities and to enjoy a certain degree of prosperity necessary for leading a cultured life. As a matter of fact, the Constitution envisages an economically

prosperous society governed by the scientific spirit and the judicious use of modern technology, while emphasising the importance of freedom and the dignity of the individual. The entire institutional structure has to be changed in order to attain this goal. As such, any institution or complex of institutions which either militates against prosperity, nationality, equity or social justice would have to be changed and modified in order to promote the goal. Of course, it must be also mentioned that while the Indian Constitution provides a blue-print for the transformation of Indian society into an ideal one, the question arises as to whether the Constitution itself is sacred, since during the emergency we saw that the Constitution could be amended even in respect of its fundamental provisions. Thus, political mechanisms, not to mention expediency, also acquire considerable importance since the Constitution can be by-passed and even sabotaged, thereby diminishing its sanctity. Commitments have been made since the parliamentary elections of 1977 to reinstate the importance and sanctity of the Constitution, and yet one cannot altogether discount the eventuality of the Constitution being tampered with.

The Indian Constitution has to be understood in the context of India's poverty as well as its insistence on the democratic framework. On the one hand, is the fact of poverty, and on the other hand is the equally necessary effort to remove poverty, and to increase economic prosperity consistent with democracy and the freedom of the individual. To carry out both these objectives simultaneously is a well-nigh difficult task. Also, because of the framing of the Constitution, the aspirations of the common people and particularly of the erstwhile deprived and disprivileged sections have been unleashed so that there is a persistent demand for doing away with all manner of deprivations and disprivileges. On the other hand, there is a great need to enhance economic prosperity and to increase the G.N.P. and of course, the per capita income. Moreover, in India, one has to compress all kinds of revolutions simultaneously and quickly since we cannot afford to wait for the natural process of economic development and industrial and technological revolution to take place.

There is an increasing pressure of circumstances which is largely created by the Constitution as well as by the pressure of political

ideologies and philosophies, particularly in the wake of the Chinese revolution. The aspirations of the people and their legitimation by suitable ideology gives a new edge to the problem of quickening the pace of overall transmission. Under these circumstances, it is natural that recourse has to be taken to political mechanisms and to institutionalise change through the use of enactments and legal mechanisms. The goals as envisaged by the Constitution, which have also been sharpened by the external situation need to be attained definitely as well as expeditiously.

Therefore, Indian society can be characterised as a society with primacy of goal attainment to use the Parsonian categories. The utmost importance is attached to the functional prerequisite of goal attainment, involving therefore, a very high degree of reliance on the use of political mechanisms, since the normal functional prerequisites of adaptation and integration cannot be expected to promote the goals. Further, since the aim of the Constitution is to transform society, there is a deliberate playing down of the importance of the functional prerequisite pattern of maintenance. It is felt that by appropriate use of political mechanisms, the functional prerequisites of integration and tension management can be taken care of adequately. Moreover, due to the acceptance of the democratic framework, goal attainment has to be engaged in with the peoples co-operation. It is true that the adoption of political mechanisms means delegating authority to people's representatives. However, it is equally clear that people's representatives *viz.*, the leaders, cannot by themselves promote the attainment of such goals without proper co-operation. This creates many difficulties, problems and complications. For instance, while enlisting the people's co-operation one has also to take into account the fact of the deprivations and disprivileges attendant on any system of social stratification. While dealing with the problems of any society, the system of social stratification has to be kept in mind, particularly when efforts are to be made to change this very system of social stratification. Peculiarly enough, in order to change this system it is equally important to obtain the co-operation and support of all layers of stratification. The history of society does not allow its leaders and rulers to ignore or wish away the traditional structures.

While modernisation and overall transformation of Indian society is the avowed goal, one cannot forget that the traditional structures which have to be transformed have to be made use of for furthering this very process of transformation. To put this in a different way, one has to emphasise the solidarities and loyalties which exist in any traditional structure. In the case of India, one can rightly mention these solidarities as based on caste and religion and further add that these very solidarities cannot only be ignored or wished away, but have to be used for promoting goal attainment, which in the ultimate analysis would mean a transformation of these very solidarities. It would be idle to imagine that the political process itself would not be affected in the bargain as a consequence of using these solidarities for promoting the goal. However, one has to remember that due to the primacy of goal attainment as well as the utmost importance attached to the use of political mechanisms, the balance is more likely to be in favour of these mechanisms than in favour of the solidarities and loyalties which stem from the traditional structure; in this case caste and religion.

To understand and analyse properly this entire exercise of societal transformation with the use of political mechanisms, while making a simultaneous use of the traditional solidarities engendered by caste and religion, it would be useful and necessary to employ the interaction model rather than to regard politics as an independent variable and caste and religion as dependent variables or *vice-versa*. Here again, the way the Constitution has been framed and the modus-operandi of implementing it has also to be borne in mind. On the one hand, the Constitution envisages a radical transformation of society and on the other hand, it seeks to do so with people's willing co-operation. Therefore, while it is regarded as expedient to resort to political mechanisms for the attainment of goal, it is equally necessary to ensure the people's co-operation through the various existing groups and solidarities. Therefore, it is really a question of understanding and analysing the model of interaction between political mechanisms and solidarities as exemplified by caste and religion. The primacy of political mechanisms is reflected in certain goals *viz.*, the goal of secular state and society. The adoption of this goal has important repercussions in dealing with the solidarities based on religion.

Similarly, the creation of a social order based on equality and social justice also has implications for the caste system which is essentially iniquitous, and yet it would be unrealistic to ignore solidarities based on caste. The use of the interaction model would therefore enable us to judge the impact of such solidarities on the political mechanisms and processes, while the primacy of such mechanisms and processes has been accepted and taken for granted. In a way, therefore, priorities have been established in favour of political mechanisms rather than in favour of the existing solidarities which stem from the traditional structure. Nevertheless, the mutuality of these two has to be emphasised rather than the adoption of an 'either or' model. In the Indian case as mentioned earlier, paradoxically enough, political mechanisms have not only to contain solidarities based on caste and religion but also to make use of them for promoting the goal of transformation of society. It is not merely a question of the co-existence of these two sets, but a question of active and continuous interaction between the two, which facilitates a change in any of such solidarities through the continuous use of political mechanisms. The interaction model mentioned earlier would thus emphasise the dialectics of the situation rather than the static nature of the relationship between the two sets. This is how, an analysis of caste, religion and politics in India becomes a meaningful and significant exercise which helps us to understand the process of transformation and the methods used to promote such transformation.

It was mentioned earlier that the leaders and rulers of Indian Society insofar as they are representatives of the people, have been entrusted with this task of overall transformation, and that they have to do so with the help of the people's co-operation. These leaders and rulers therefore, have to continuously make use of the various solidarities and groups, while simultaneously seeking to transform these solidarities and groups in order to promote an overall transformation of Indian society. This can be attained in several ways. Wriggins¹ mentions several alternate strategies for attaining this goal, viz. (1) by projecting personality, (2) by building up organisation, (3) by political ideology, (4) by rewarding the

¹ W. Howard Wriggins, *The Ruler's Imperative*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1969.

faithful and intimidating the opponents, (5) by developing economy, (6) by expanding political participation and (7) by foreign policy, and further adds that these alternate strategies are not mutually exclusive but, in a given case, can obtain in various types of combinations at the same time.

In the case of India, at least during Nehru's regime, one finds that the projection of personality in terms of charisma was emphasised as well as the building up of organisation and the revolving of political ideology. Simultaneously, by resorting to rewarding the faithful, by developing economy and by appropriate use of foreign policy as also by extending political participation, the political process was sought to be made as efficient and result-yielding as possible. The various strategies listed above take into account the importance of leadership goals and the various kinds of groups in politics. In a way, these strategies are likely to be effective because of a realistic appraisal of the situation rather than by the adoption of an idealistic position. Ultimately, political reality cannot be made of one piece and there are various currents and cross-currents which one has to take into account successively counteracting them in order to promote the ultimate goal. To use the existing groups means full awareness of the influence and pressure of tradition and the ability to use them for promoting the ultimate goal, thereby ensuring the transformation of such groups. Thus it is that when one speaks of caste, religion and politics in India one has to take into account the interaction between these three and also observe how the solidarities based on caste and religion get transformed as a result of employing the political mechanisms and processes. One can also, at the same time, appreciate certain limitations and restrictions on the use of political mechanisms which arise due to the operation of the influence and pressure exerted by such solidarities. It is really a question of parallelogram of forces, and yet, as mentioned earlier, priorities have already been established because of the Constitution, and perhaps more so because of the sensitisation of the people to the ideology as envisaged in the Constitution. Therefore, one has to emphasise that as a result of the unleashing of new aspirations, the ideological and moral legitimisation of the two types of solidarities mentioned above has been shaken at the very outset, thus paving the way for their transformation.

In view of the approach indicated, it would be useful to scrutinise the discussion on tradition and modernity in the Indian context. Generally speaking, the tenor of any discussion pertaining to tradition and modernity seems to emphasise the opposition between the two and harps on the dichotomous nature of tradition and modernity. Thus, many authors refer to tradition as a static feature of society and to modernity as its dynamic element. It is further maintained that the static process is essentially conservative and attempts to maintain the *status quo* of the social system. The dynamic process which creates structural changes in the social system is branded as progressive.

However, one knows for a fact that it would be difficult to come across any society which is only dynamic and does not contain elements of tradition. It is true that some scholars have questioned the propriety of such dichotomous presentation. Thus, we find 'that the recent literature on modernisation shows a growing disaffection with the "modern versus traditional" typology of societies and cultures, and a search for new theories. At least, this typology is now increasingly recognised as a set of constructed ideal types and not as an empirical description of societies or a set of generalisations about them. Those who continue to use the modern-traditional contrast at an empirical level do so by mapping the statistical distributions of traits designated modern or traditional in different countries or by making lists of such traits for a single country. The implications of such lists and frequency distributions for a theory of modernisation as a process of social and cultural change are at best opaque'.²

There is an increasing awareness thus, that the dichotomous nature of tradition and modernity which has been emphasised is really untenable in the light of reality. As Shils observes, 'All the existing things have a past. Nothing which happens escapes completely from the grip of the past. Some events scarcely escape at all from its grip. Much of what exists is a persistence or reproduction of what existed earlier. Entities, events or systems physiological, psychological, social and cultural have careers in which at each point the set of the system stands in some determined

² Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernises*, Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, 1972, p. 384.

relationship to the set of the systems at earlier points'.³ The point has been well taken that no society can be completely modern. Rudolphs⁴ say that 'the misunderstanding of modern society that excludes its traditional features is paralleled by a misdiagnosis of traditional society that underestimates its modern potentialities. Those who study new nations comparatively often find only manifest and dominant values, configurations and structures that fit a model of tradition and miss latent deviants, or minority ones that may fit a model of modernity. All civilisations and complex cultures predominantly traditional or modern, encompassed a range of sentiments, psychological predispositions, norms and structures that 'belong' with an ideal type other than their own'.⁵ Tradition has thus been described as symbolising a static society where status is essentially ascriptive and the system of loyalties and groupings is only particularistic, and where there is a predisposition on the part of its members to accept reality without any sense of dissatisfaction. On the other hand a modern society is depicted as being dynamic, where the status of a person is essentially achieved, the groupings and solidarities are universalistic and emphasis is placed on innovation and manipulation of the total environment. If one were to scrutinise the facts, one would find that even in a so-called traditional society there are elements which go against the 'ideal type' of tradition and that even in a modern society such elements which are contradictory to 'ideal type' of modernity exist.

Nevertheless this entire exercise of the distinction between tradition and modernity is useful because it enables one to plot change, say from a relatively traditional structure to a modern structure. In fact, modernisation is an unending process which is not finite because it means an unending capacity to innovate and to conquer the environment to suit people's needs, aspirations, ideas, values, beliefs, etc. Of course, one has to also remember that in order to plot such change in the direction of modernity several

³ Edward Shils, 'Tradition', in A. R. Desai ed., *Essays on Modernisation on Underdeveloped Societies*, Vol. 1, Bombay : Thacker and Co. Ltd., Bombay, 1971, pp. 1-39.

⁴ Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, New Delhi : Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi, 1967, p. 5.

⁵ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1956.

theories have been offered, one being the evolutionary model which emphasises a law of progression from tradition to modernity in terms of definite stages and phases. Several others have tried to prepare a list of the various traits which are relevant to the specific stages of such development. However, one finds that such categorisation and pigeon-holding of traits seems to believe actual reality, because if modernisation is innovation and one's unending desire to innovate according to one's needs and aspirations, it would indeed be unrealistic to expect every society to experience the same kind of needs and aspirations and therefore follow a chalked-out path of innovation.

As a matter of fact, the demands for innovation vary from one society to another and as such the innovative enterprise would also differ from one society to another. Then again, there is the usual insistence on the importance of innovation and diffusion and so the latter is emphasised more. Again, it must be pointed out that as far as the latter is concerned, it is not practicable or even desirable that any trait, however important it may be, be directly accepted or imitated from a modern society. There is a logic of institutional and cultural patterns whereby it is not possible to transplant such structures from one system into the other. Contact with other societies may spark the process of modernisation, and yet modernisation has to be attained by each society taking into account its own peculiarities, special needs, assets and liabilities. The evolutionary model earlier referred to, again tends to break down when modernisation becomes a value for the people, in which case the people concerned do not have the patience to undergo the process of modernisation by confining themselves to following the logic of stages and phases. Moreover, modernisation does not also mean a complete substitution of tradition by modernistic traits and characteristics. On the other hand, in order to achieve the goal of modernisation not only do the existing structures have to be taken note of and accepted, but they have also to be made use of in order to further the very attainment of modernisation.

Some of the characteristics of modernisation are said to be achieved status, universalism, individuality, rationality, a differentiated social system, social justice, equality, the capacity to innovate,



and the ability to manipulate. In their discussion on modernisation, some authors have regarded religion as an impediment to rationality and therefore to modernisation. On the other hand, Max Weber regards religion, particularly Protestant ethics, as being largely responsible for the development of modern capitalism which in its turn facilitated modernisation. According to Weber,⁶ the central value system underlying Calvinism was congenial to rationality, or rather, it goaded its adherents and followers to economic rationality. Thus religion which was, by and large, regarded as a force favouring tradition was pointed out to be, on the contrary, a force favouring rationality and modernisation. One could make use of this insight and look for certain structures which *prima facie*, spell traditionality but may actually have the potential for promoting modernisation. As mentioned earlier, when a society wants deliberate modernisation and also does not want to upset the existing system, one has to emphasise the use of existing structures for furthering the goal of modernisation. 'In India, it would be an impossible task to separate the element of continuity from the elements of change. For the two are inextricably woven together to form a seamless fabric of Indian existence'.⁷

In respect of Indian society, it has been generally pointed out that Hinduism with its attendant caste system would essentially be a force in favour of tradition. Caste which is regarded as an integral feature of Hinduism is known to be discriminatory and inequitable and therefore, it is argued by many, that such a system would essentially dampen or even prevent the process of modernisation. Hinduism, again is equated with a monolithic structure as well as philosophy and as such is regarded as being an impediment to modernisation. As we shall discuss in detail, Hinduism is a complex of mutually incongruent traits and characteristics. Nor has Hinduism remained the same over a period of time since it has been exposed to protest movements and revolts from within as well as attacks from without. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the theory of re-birth and the theory of *karma* for explaining the persistence of Hinduism. However, one should not fail to take

⁶ P. N. Mital, 'The Indian Political System', in M. R. Sinha, ed., *The Struggles of Modern India*, Bombay; Indian Institute of Asian Studies, 1967, pp. 31-41.

⁷ Ashok Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan, *The Communal Triangle*, Allahabad Kitabistan: 1942, p. 78.

into account the various protest movements which have arisen within Hinduism itself. Hinduism has also been exposed to forces from without such as Christianity, Islam, the western rule, etc., which have necessitated a rethinking and re-examination of the social structure of Hinduism and its various components. It is further maintained that the importance attached to religion in India, not only to Hinduism, but to Islam, Christianity etc., is another force in favour of tradition and as such acts as an impediment to modernisation.

There are several aspects of modernisation which have been emphasised by various thinkers, such as the political, economic, cultural, structural and ecological dimensions. It was pointed out earlier that resorting to political processes and mechanisms for furthering modernisation has established priority in favour of the political process, and therefore attempts are made to overcome deficiencies in society in respect of economic, cultural, ecological and the structural dimensions in a certain way. It is admitted that in India political modernisation is sufficiently advanced in view of its democratic framework and its well developed political institutions. Besides, the political process in India is being used to further the process of modernisation in its various aspects like the economic, cultural, ecological, and the structural. Efforts are being made to modernise its economy. In the cultural sphere, an attempt is being made to introduce new ideas and values. Then again the social structure of India is sought to be changed so as to be consistent with modern notions and values. In the ecological sphere, efforts are being made to develop features which will ensure a revamping of its rural structure and to promote development of urban civilisation.

India has declared itself a secular state and religion is sought to be made a purely personal matter. However a distinction has to be made between a secular state and a secular society. A state can be declared secular by appropriate enactments and declarations, while in order to transform itself into a secular society the changing of convictions of its members is required, which of course cannot be easily attained. Another trait of political modernisation is a growth of nationalism which is again evidenced in the case of India. Notwithstanding certain problems of boundary maintenance and

integration, particularly where the border states are concerned, there is no denying the fact that a good deal of progress has been made in developing a spirit of nationalism amongst its various constituents. By and large, the diverse ethnic, religious and cultural elements have been welded into a common Indian nationhood.

India declared herself to be a secular state which has, to an extent, meant tackling the problem of religious diversities which could well have been an impediment in the development of nationhood. India is a veritable subcontinent and represents a diversity of interests which have come to be articulated in terms of the political process. Various groups and solidarities have succeeded in articulating their aspirations and claims by resorting to the political process. Therefore the political process on the one hand can lay down a certain code of conduct and action for the diverse groups to represent and push their claims, and on the other hand, it has to increasingly enable such diversities in promoting the concept of nationhood. This results in a certain degree of compromise and acceptance and the formation of a plural society rather than a monolithic structure.

India with her long history has many complexities which can be traced back to the various historical developments to which it has been subjected, like the impact of Christianity and Islam, Islamic rule, British rule, Westernisation, etc. All these external forces have affected the development of India in certain directions. The complexities introduced by religion have been in a way superimposed on the already prevailing complexities generated by the caste system. As a matter of fact, the partition of undivided India into India and Pakistan is largely a consequence of the complexities arising out of the disintegrative features of religion. Then again, the caste system has also given rise to certain fissures in the social system which have impaired the process of integration, particularly in the wake of British rule and the consequent breakdown of the traditional economy. Moreover, as a result of British rule, there was a triangular interaction and even conflict between the Hindus, the Muslims and the British. The brief review of the part played by the government in shaping Hindu-Muslim relations is, however, enough to prove to any unbiased student of Indian politics that the so-called Hindu-Muslim problem is a triangle. A hidden hand has

played considerable part in intensifying discord and formenting distrust.'

After Independence, the creation of Pakistan, on the one hand and the relative backwardness of the Muslims which is largely a result of their backwardness in respect of modern education and secular jobs, plus the memories of history have created a complex problem. It is not only the fact of Muslims being the biggest minority in the country whereby certain problems arise but it is because of its antecedents that the problem assumes importance. For this reason religion cannot be only a matter of personal concern but acquires a political dimension, which can be tackled mainly on the political plane. In the case of the caste system attempts were made to provide special facilities and representation to the disprivileged and deprived castes. Politicisation of caste and religion has thus in certain ways facilitated dealing with these two structures more or less in the open, and has also meant that they are treated on an all-India plane and regarded as national problems requiring urgent attention. Therefore it opens out possibilities for secularising these problems to a large extent and therefore to defreezing the traditional complications. The acceptance of the reality of a plural society, and deliberate efforts made to deal with this reality by resorting to political processes, also signifies an attempt to promote integration while respecting differences. Differences are not allowed to stand in the way of forging a new identity. In the case of the caste system, attempts are being made to remove its structural incongruencies in respect of the new values and beliefs.

As for religion, because of the political process, efforts are being made to narrow down the problem. In fact by resorting to the political process the problems of both caste and religion have been narrowed down to their bare essentials instead of allowing the problems to become diffused in nature. The creation of a plural society is also regarded as an important aspect or ingredient of modernisation, and efforts are being made to accept, maintain, as well as to promote a plural society in India. One can say that, paradoxically speaking, forces which are regarded as the very antithesis of modernisation are not only being neutralised but also being used for promoting modernisation through the promotion

of a plural society. This of course means certain compromises which generate impatience and resistance on the part of some, such as the refusal by the Union government to force a common civil code for all sections of the population.

While modernisation in its entirety has been accepted as a goal as exemplified by the Indian Constitution, yet there is no attempt to rush through the process of modernisation by resorting to compulsion. Persuasion rather than compulsion has been the strategy adopted, which is quite consistent with the democratic framework, particularly with the spirit of democracy which respects freedom of the individual.

The acceptance of structures which have been, by and large, categorised as antagonistic to modernisation and the attempts made to use these structures for furthering modernisation by employing political mechanisms, thus necessitate rethinking on our part in respect of formulations regarding the inter-relationship between caste, religion and politics in India. Several authors have taken for granted that caste and religion would remain antagonistic to modernisation under any set of circumstances. Furthermore, they have even maintained that politics in its turn would be contaminated by caste and religion, thus under-rating the importance or the capacity of politics to effect any changes in caste or religion. This represents a particular approach which is essentially one-sided and neglects the mutuality of impact between the two sides. It is our aim to examine impartially and with an open mind the mutuality of interaction between caste and politics and between religion and politics. We want to look for a new alloy which is being created as a result of such interaction. We do not accept the 'either or' approach but deliberately adopt the interaction model to analyse the relationship between caste, religion and politics in India. It is our attempt to analyse such interaction in the context of the quest for modernisation and the deliberate attempts made to promote this goal as exemplified in the Indian Constitution, the enactments made and the various measures taken towards this end. To repeat, we do not accept the dichotomous presentation of tradition and modernity but maintain that not only are these not mutually exclusive but also, that neither tradition nor modernity can either substitute or oust the other. What we mean is not a simple

co-existence of the two but a delineation of the spheres of tradition and modernity in such a manner that the goal of modernisation can be promoted without unduly destroying tradition. In a plural society, where the democratic framework has been adopted as a matter of conviction, the antagonistic nature of tradition and modernity will not be encouraged to persist and features which have been dubbed as traditional will also be harnessed for promoting modernisation.

It may be argued that several authors have already addressed themselves to the discussion of tradition and modernity in the Indian context as well as to the analysis of politics, caste and religion in India. Most of the studies undertaken by Indian and foreign scholars relating to this area have been mainly based on empirical investigations and some of them have also been of a thematic nature. Therefore, it was our decision not to replicate any empirical study, since we felt that this was not necessary. Similarly it was our decision to steer clear of the traditional dichotomies which have been presented by several scholars, and to approach the whole problem from a different perspective provided by the interaction model as mentioned earlier. We propose to follow this interaction model, basing ourselves on the fact made available to us through the various existing studies instead of carrying out a fresh investigation. Our aim is limited to an analysis of the available material from the particular approach suggested above, and it is our belief that some of the usual Gordian knots will at least be better understood, if not unravelled, by adopting our approach. While doing so one has to accept certain limitations arising from such an approach and also from basing ourselves mainly on the available material. It is quite likely that some material, which has not been available to us, might have adopted an approach similar to ours of which we are unaware. Therefore, when we suggest that the use of interaction model is our contribution, it has to be taken with a certain degree of caution.



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CASTE, COMMUNAL POLITICS AND SOCIETY

*(A case study of the Puliangudi-Kadayanallur belt of
Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu)*

BRINDAVAN C. MOSES

'POLITICS is a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realisation of certain goals and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and consolidate positions. The important thing is organisation and articulation of support, and where politics is mass-based the point is to articulate support through the organisations in which the masses are to be found'.¹

Politics is, of necessity, concerned with disagreements and conflicts, actual or potential which arise out of social diversity. It, therefore, has its origin in differences and inequalities due to social, religious and economic structures. These differences form the bases of interest groups. There may be an agreement between interest groups (for instance, Muslims and Harijans) which are complementary to each other over the action which they can take in opposition to other interest groups (caste Hindus), which have a different objective. In fine, the basic quality of politics is the treatment of disagreements through more or less formalised political institutions and processes.

Political institutions do not operate in a vacuum. They tend to find bases in society either through existing organisational forms or by invoking new structures. A significant feature of contemporary India is the qualitative change taking place in its traditional structures of power. A feeble legislative attempt was made in Independent India 'to ensure to all its citizens justice, social, economic and political . . .'. The principal factors to 'modernise' the traditional Indian Society and usher in a 'socialistic pattern of society' were the introduction of adult franchise and

¹ Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics*, Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi 1970, p. 4.

economic planning through the launching of a series of Five Year Plans. New types of structures such as political parties, statutory panchayats, various governmental departments etc., have come into being since Independence and have penetrated into the rural areas. However, a 'modernising' society like India with centuries of established traditions and entrenched customs is neither really modern nor hopelessly traditional. What really happens is, it moves from one threshold to another, transforming in the process both the indigenous structures and attitudes and the newly introduced institutions and ideas. No doubt the impact of 'modernisation' on indigenous structures is quite strong; it disturbs the 'stability' and 'tranquillity' of the traditional society, very often leading to violent upheavals.

Each structure of power can be examined for its caste/class or its religious composition. In the past, at the local level, the entrenched dominant caste was often the principal locus of power. Today, there are political structures of various kinds such as political parties, traditional and statutory panchayats, social/cultural organisations (but some of them in reality, fronts of political parties in disguise), etc. However, a particular dominant caste may still be the principal locus of power by being highly represented in the local, political and other institutions.

Two kinds of change are noticed in the politics of Tamil Nadu. Firstly, power has shifted from the Brahmin caste to others. For instance, in several districts Thevars, Vanniyars and Nadars have wrested control over village politics from Brahmins and other 'high' castes. This has occurred not only at the level of village politics; it has happened on a wider scale in Tamil Nadu as a whole when Brahmins were displaced by non-Brahmins in important political bodies.²

The second kind of change is that the caste system, has penetrated the structures of power including the new structures of power that have emerged during the last 35 years. This implies that it is necessary for those aspiring for political power to cultivate the

² Andre Beteille, 'Caste and Political Group Formation in Tamil Nadu' in Rajni Kothari (ed.) *Caste in Indian Politics*.

Government of India, *Report of the Backward Classes Commission*, Second Part, Volume III to VII, 1980.



support of various caste and religious groups. This support may be given in return for material benefits. But material benefits cannot be given directly or immediately and at all times in exchange for every kind of support. The mobilisation of support, therefore requires other non-material attractions ; it appeals to loyalties of various kinds which have a psychic satisfaction like caste superiority, protection of religion, brotherhood, etc.

It is in this sense that 'primordial loyalty' to caste or loyalty to one's religion provides powerful bases for political mobilisation and support in India.³ People are expected to support members of their own caste or members of their religion. Loyalty and obligation to caste or religion are considered 'good' and as a matter of 'duty'. So, it is but natural that this loyalty is carried over to the arena of institutional politics. This, however does not mean that there are no tensions between caste and religious loyalties. The latter often cuts across caste and can be in conflict with the former. Such divided loyalties are inherent features of the system and they allow for certain degree of indeterminacy which is exploited for support.⁴

Caste may enter into the political process in many ways. Appeals may be made to caste loyalties in a very general way ; for instance, Vanniyars should vote for Vanniya candidates. Secondly, networks of inter-personal relations are activated and strengthened both during elections and during crisis situations, for mobilising support along caste lines. Since kinship, marriage and commensality are within the boundaries of caste, intra-caste relations are very important. Thirdly, the caste associations may seek to articulate their caste interests in an organised and systematic way.⁵ In a way, the caste structure provides one of the principal organisational clusters along which the bulk of the popu-

³ George Mathew, 'Primordality and Elections' in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3 (September, 1982).

⁴ For instance, the attitude of Christian Nadars in the 1981 communal riots in Kanyakumari district was ambivalent. They were torn between their caste loyalty towards Hindu Nadars who attacked Christian fishermen, and their religious loyalty as 'Christians' towards Christian fishermen in their struggle against Hindu Nadars and other caste Hindus. Or, the refusal of Catholic Harijans to support Hindu Harijans at Villupuram in 1978 when they were butchered by the caste Hindu mob.

⁵ The *Vanniyakkula Kshatriya Sangam*, The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*, etc.

lation is found to live. And politics does try to organise through such a structure. Drawing upon these interacting structures in their contest for power are the real power elites—the real beneficiaries. They mobilise caste/religious groupings and identities in order to organise their power. They find in these groupings and identities extremely well articulated and flexible bases for organisation which, in turn, lend themselves to political manipulation. In short, traditional loyalties towards caste and religion are exploited by the power elites to achieve political power. Thus, in any conflict between rival power elites, both find it handy to get the backing of the masses through the traditional channels of caste and religion, using the traditional techniques and symbols.

The relationship between caste and politics is very close indeed, and it is basically a relationship for the specific purpose of organising public activity. The focus, therefore, should be, what structures and networks of relationships enter into the political process and how. How do different political parties or movements or communal forces, or even different interest groups within a single political party mobilise different social strata as resources for their political objectives? For instance, how do the Muslims, the RSS, the Thevars, Nadars and the others mobilise their supporters for political objectives? What was the role of the RSS* in Kanyakumari district? Or, what was the objective of Muslims in Puliangudi area to befriend the Harijans and jointly float the S.S.S.?** A sense of discontent or exploitation felt by a caste (for instance, Harijans) can provide a viable basis for the mobilisation of the masses of that caste, for assertion of their rights *vis-a-vis* others. Naturally, the organisational and psychological conditions of caste organisation are turned into a resource for politics.

Studies in the past on caste have emphasised it mainly, as a system of social stratification. Of course, they are important but caste is also a system of conflict and interaction. Factionalism and caste cleavages, patterns of alignment and realignment among

* *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (literally translated as Political Volunteer League).

** *Samathuva Sogotharathva Sangam* (literally translated as Organisation for Equality, Fraternity and Brotherhood).

the various castes and sub-castes and a continuous striving for social mobility have always been and are prominent features of the caste system.⁶

Expanding franchise, liberal education, governmental patronage and grant of special privileges to Backward classes and Scheduled castes and tribes, economic planning, especially agricultural development, various legislative measures like land reforms and social welfare programmes since Independence have affected the social structure in rural India. Economic opportunity, governmental patronage and positions of power offered by the new institutions and the new leadership have indeed, drawn the once inarticulate sections of Indian society into the struggle for power in this changed situation. Shifts in the social and economic positions of different groups have disturbed the 'social equilibrium' and led to tensions and struggles of various nature in the towns and countryside. New leadership has emerged and is provided with support from the castes which have become economically and socially assertive in the recent past. A notable feature of this new leadership is that it is acceptable to more than one caste or religion.⁷

In the pre-Independence days, the struggle for power and economic benefit was, at first, confined to the 'upper' castes (Brahmins vs. Mudaliars, Chettiars and others). For instance, the Justice Party came into existence in 1917 to challenge the near-monopoly domination of Brahmins in governmental services and professions; the leaders of the Justice Party were drawn from the non-Brahmin 'upper' caste elites from the Vellala, Mudaliar, Naidu, Chettiar, Reddi castes who in fact represented the *zamindari*, landed and

⁶ There is traditional enmity between Thevars and Nadars; they are strongly opposed to each other. However, in Puliangudi, the Nadars gave their (indirect) support to the Thevars and stood against the Harijans.

Traditionally, Pillais and Nadars do not see eye to eye on many issues. Also, Nairs, once masters and landowners and Nadars, agricultural labourers and tenants were opposed to each other. However, recently, in Kanyakumari district 'high' caste Pillais, Hindu Nadars, Nairs, Kurups and others came together against the Christian fishermen.

⁷ In Kanyakumari district, during the recent communal riots the caste Hindus like Pillais and Nairs accepted the leadership of a socially lower caste person, Thanulinga Nadar, as the leader of the *Hindu Munnani*. At Puliangudi the Samathuva Sagotharathva Sangam which was initially mooted by the Muslim League was readily accepted by the Harijans.

trading interests in the then Madras Presidency. Gradually, with the rise of the 'Backward castes' like Nadars, Vanniyars, Thevars, multi-caste and multi-factional alignments came into existence. Political mobilisation for support of various castes and factions, in the course of time, gave rise to a process of 'co-operation' from other castes. However, till recently, the 'backward castes' with the exception of Vanniyars and Nadars who had powerful caste organisation of their own, were dependent on the entrenched dominant castes. Dependency on the 'upper' and 'backward' landed castes is still very strong among the scheduled castes. It is only since the late 1960s that the process of mobilisation of the Scheduled Castes on a mass scale is taking place. However, this process of mobilisation though of marginal benefit to the Scheduled Castes is largely used by political parties and communalists for the purpose of winning their support.

Thus, in this changed context, caste identities themselves have taken to new forms of articulation changing the very 'ethics' of the caste system and diminishing the importance of its ritualistic and ascriptive bases. Political parties and communalists invoke primordial sentiment and organise their support on the basis of 'pockets' of caste and religious groups. The operation of come petitive politics has drawn caste out of its apolitical context and given it a new status. The same phenomenon is taking place with the religious loyalties and even to minority group's sentiments such as the Muslim community and the Scheduled Castes. In short, caste and religion have become politicised and politics, perforce, has to contend with caste and religion for mobilisation to enable sharing or wresting of political power.

SECTION II

To the people living in Puliangudi,* a small town situated between Sankaranayanarkoil and Tenkasi of Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu and to the people in the villages nearby, the three days in June 1982 (June 9-11) were, indeed, fateful and a nightmarish experience for most of them. The Kadayanallur-Puliangudi belt

* Puliangudi is about 86 km from Tirunelveli, the district H.Q. town of Tirunelveli district, situated in the southern part of the State of Tamil Nadu and about 620 km from the City of Madras, the State H.Q.

experienced a series of attacks on the Harijans during those three days climaxing in the cold-blooded murder of five Harijans including an old woman at Ayyapuram, an exclusive Harijan settlement, 5 km east of Puliangudi. Around 11 a.m. on June 11, a mob of about 2000 caste Hindus, mostly Maravas (also called Thevars) from the nearby villages marched to Ayyapuram, armed with deadly weapons. After hacking to death the poor, defenceless five Harijans with their *vels* (spears) and *aruvals* (curved knives) the frenzied mob reduced 41 huts and several haystacks to ashes and left 21 others with different degrees of injuries. Several cattle and goats were roasted alive in the arson. The villagers lost several of their earthly possessions—their aluminium and earthen pots and pans—which were smashed to pieces.

But, why did the frenzied Marava mob choose Ayyapuram for arson and carnage? Was this murderous attack merely an accident or pre-planned? Ayyapuram is an isolated 'out of the way' hamlet and the Harijans there were, mostly Christians and not Muslims. To comprehend the real reasons one has to understand the socio-economic conditions prevailing in and around this area and the politics of this area in the past; especially the political mobilisation attempted by the Muslim leaders, and the Hindu communalists and also the social protest and political aspirations of the Harijans of Puliangudi and neighbouring villages.

A series of events during the summer months of 1982 was sufficient indication that these would definitely climax in an eruption of caste violence. The Ayyapuram carnage was the climax of these series of caste attacks in the surrounding Kadayanallur—Puliangudi belt. The 'immediate' causes for this tragedy began three days before. On June 8, the *Gnana Ratham* (Chariot of knowledge), a mobile van of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) (in fact, a front organisation of the R.S.S.) carrying the two-foot bronze idol of Subramania, a gift from the Palani temple, entered Puliangudi. (Lord Subramania the other name for Lord Muruga, is the presiding deity at the famous Tiruchendur temple in Tirunelveli district; perhaps, the most sacred and most popular God for the Hindus in this district.) The *Ratham*, an ambitious project, inaugurated by Sankaracharya of *Kanchi Kamakotti Pettam* was launched by the VHP about two weeks before at Tiruvannamalai

temple. The two lakhs scheme envisaged the *Ratham* to be taken through villages ostensibly to propagate the Hindu *dharma*, but specifically to those places where conversions to Islam had taken place. It was equipped with sophisticated audio-visual aids and loudspeakers gifted by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam to broadcast pre-recorded talks and *bhajans*. The *Ratham* had cost Rs. 2 lakhs (it is rumoured that it was donated by the TVS group of companies) and the monthly recurring expenses would come to Rs. 10,000. In fact the VHP had plans to provide one such van to each district in Tamil Nadu.⁸ A group of volunteers accompanied the *Ratham* who apart from performing *pujas* also addressed the gathering, specially appealing to the Harijans to stick to Hinduism and to those who had strayed away to Christianity and Islam to return to the 'parent' religion.

The distinctive feature of the *Gnana Ratham* project, as it is claimed, is direct access of the public to the deity, a practice unknown in the temples of South India and that devotees of all castes including Harijans, could themselves offer *puja*, to the bronze idol of Subramania. The idea is to 'instill' and 'promote' a feeling of 'oneness' among Hindus. Besides, the *archanas* (prayers and *pujas*) to the deity are performed in Tamil which could be easily understood by the masses unlike Sanskrit *mantras* used in temples. The questions to be asked are, why all this sudden concern for Harijans? Why *archanas* in Tamil? And why, of all places, the *Gnana Ratham* straight from Tiruvannamalai to Puliangudi? Is it because Meenakshipuram, from where Harijans had embraced Islam in 1981, is close by?

When the VHP volunteers tried to take the *Ratham* into the Harijan Colony in Puliangudi, a section of Harijans there who had become members of the S.S.S. floated jointly by the Muslims and Harijans of the Tenkasi-Kadayanallur-Puliangudi belt, objected to the *Ratham* being taken through their colony.

⁸ S. Vedantham, Organising Secretary of VHP, in an interview for *Caravan*, August 1982. 'The *Ratham* was originally scheduled to cover all Harijan colonies in and around Puliangudi'. Following the Puliangudi riots, he says 'the *Ratham* returned to Madurai . . . from Madurai, the van visited a village called Kandai where two years ago, much earlier to the Meenakshipuram Conversion, Harijans had embraced Islam'.

About two months prior to this incident, this idea of a joint front for Muslims and Harijans was mooted by the Muslim leaders. The brains behind this move were Sahul Hameed, the lone Muslim League Member of (the Tamil Nadu) Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.) and his brother Rifayee, a former Member of Parliament (M.P.) and vice-President of the State Unit of the Muslim League. In fact, the missionary zeal of the Muslims in Tamil Nadu dates back to the late 1950s. The Isha Athul Islam Society started about 30 years ago has been serving the Muslims in Tamil Nadu since then. The Society's President is Rifayee and the General Secretary is his brother Sahul Hameed, the same persons who have floated the S.S.S. This Society like the Christian 'missions' runs schools, and orphanages and according to unconfirmed reports, gets large sums of money from Muslim countries for conversion of Hindus to Islam. The SSS organised a series of meetings during the two months prior to the *Gnana Ratham* incident in Puliangudi, starting with a meeting at Subramaniapuram on May 5, in which Harijans from Puliangudi participated. Joint meetings of Harijans and Muslims were also held at Kadayanallur, Ayyapuram, Puliangudi and at Muthusamypuram. These meetings were addressed by the Muslim leaders. No overt attempt was made by the Muslim leaders in these meetings to convert Harijans to Islam. But they repeatedly harped on the theme of Muslim-Harijan unity. The meeting at Ayyapuram was well attended, organised ostensibly for the celebration of Dr. Ambedkar's birthday and ended with a meal; Muslims partook in the feast. In short, for over two months, a concerted effort was made by the Muslim leaders to organise the Kadayanallur-Puliangudi Harijans, and bring them under the banner of the S.S.S., all in the name of 'equality', 'fraternity' and 'brotherhood'.

The day the *Gnana Ratham* arrived at Puliangudi, a public meeting was to be held by the SSS in the evening at Kadayanallur some 15 km away. Harijans from Subramaniapuram, Ayyapuram and Puliangudi, hired lorries and tractors to go to Kadayanallur to attend the meeting. Muslims also joined them. Harijans were enraged after 15 of them and a Muslim were injured when they were heavily stoned by the Maravas while passing through Chokkam-

patti,⁹ a Marava village, on their way to the meeting. The injured displayed their injuries to the audience assembled at the SSS meeting.

Nobody is sure what made the Maravas of Chokkampatti attack the Harijans. It is alleged by the caste Hindus that the Maravas were enraged by the base slogan *Maravanai Vettu, Marathiyai Kattu* ('kill the Marava men, marry (or embrace) the Marava women') raised by the Harijans while proceeding to the Kadayannallur meeting. But it seems more likely that the Thevars were vexed about the *Gnana Ratham* not being allowed into Puliangudi and were also alarmed at the growing unity of the Harijans and the Muslims.

On hearing of the stoning at Chokkampatti and the opposition of Harijans to the entry of the *Ratham* into their colony, the *Ratham* was ordered to be taken to Chintamani, a neighbouring multi-caste village very close to Puliangudi. The Harijans returning from the meeting in buses were again assaulted by Maravas at Chokkampatti on the morning of June 9. So, on their return to Puliangudi the Harijans looted a textile shop owned by a Marava from Chokkampatti to give vent to their anger. About 200 Harijans also attacked the Puliangudi police station when some of them were rounded up by the police; the police fired in the air to disperse the mob. Earlier, the Harijan mob, on alighting from the buses brought down the arch put up to welcome the *Gnana Ratham* in an attempt to stop the vehicular traffic passing through Puliangudi. They also damaged 5 state transport buses. An SOS was sent to Tenkasi and Tirumelveli for police reinforcement.

It is alleged by the police that the Harijan mob gathered again on the 10th evening in front of the police station and attacked it forcing the police this time to open fire at the mob. However, it is more likely that the police, emboldened by the reinforcements during the day and itching to wreak vengeance on the Harijans for their audacity in attacking the police station the previous morning, raided the Harijan colony,¹⁰ killing one on the spot and bayoneting

⁹ Chokkampatti, a Marava stronghold in Tenkasi taluk was the headquarters of a very powerful *zamindar* who had defied British authority for some time.

¹⁰ The Harijan colony lies on the east side across the main road just opposite to the police station and the bus stand; the textile shop looted lies very close to the police station, may be about 75 to 100 metres from it.

another to death. Almost at the same time about 150 houses belonging to the Moopanars, most of whom in this area are weavers by occupation, were set on fire and razed to the ground most likely by the Muslims, reducing to ashes their looms in the process. The Muslims and Moopanars in Puliangudi have had a long-standing misunderstanding on a number of issues and perhaps the Muslims used this opportunity to teach the Moopanars a lesson. The Moopanar houses are sandwiched between the Muslim houses, and the Nadar houses located across the road. It is curious that none of the Thevar houses at Puliangudi were set on fire. The repurcussion of the Puliangudi riots was borne primarily by the Harijans and to a limited extent by the Moopanars and Muslims.

There was no loss of life for Muslims except for one who was stabbed to death at Vasudevanallur when two Muslim shops were ransacked on June 10. However, the value of Muslim property destroyed by the caste Hindus was quite staggering. Coconut and banana plantations and sugarcane farms, pumpsets etc., belonging to Muslims were destroyed in Kadayanallur, Puliangudi and Vasudevanallur areas. A mosque at Puliangudi was partially destroyed by the caste Hindus. Bundles of haystacks kept inside the mosque at Idaikal village near Tenkasi were destroyed in a fire on the night of June 16. Earlier, a thatched shed which housed a mosque at Meenakshipuram was gutted on the night of June 12. The shed was constructed in Feb. 1981 when there was mass conversion of the Harijans of that village, to Islam.

The Harijans had to pay a very heavy price for their social protest against the oppression by the caste Hindus, particularly the Maravas. They had to pay for it with the loss of human life. The worst was to come on June 11.

About 2000 men, mostly Maravas armed with sticks, sickles, *aruvals*, *vels* and crowbars from the surrounding villages of Talaivankottai, Malaiyadikuruchi, Desiyampatti, Nelkattanseval¹¹ and other Marava villages descended on Ayyapuram (a Harijan village) after the menfolk had gone to the fields to work. Several

¹¹ Nelkattanseval, also known as Avudaipuram was the stronghold of the leader of the Marava Confederacy by name of Puli Tevan who fought against the East India Company.

of the attackers were said to have had sacred ash on their forehead and the weapons they carried bore the mark of *kumkum* suggesting that they had offered prayers in a temple before their attack on Harijans. Many of these men were drunk. A few were fashionably dressed young men. Some of the attackers sported saffron coloured towels. Huts were set on fire and brick houses were demolished with crowbars. They broke open the houses, threatened the women and looted vessels, money and jewellery. In a frenzy they chopped off the earlobes of women to get the earrings. All this, including the cold-blooded murder of five Harijans at Ayyapuram, was committed under the very nose of a small posse of police stationed there.

En route to Ayyapuram a section of the mob branched off to a Harijan street in the neighbouring Marava village, Vellagoundanpatti, setting fire to 17 houses and ransacking 14 others. It is worth rementioning that there are no Muslim converts in these two villages. A sizeable number of the Harijans in these two villages are Christians. On June 12, men from neighbouring villages like Avudaiyapuram (Nelkattanseval), and Alangulam attacked Muthusamypuram, another Harijan village near Puliangudi with *aruvals*, *vel kambus*, and kerosene, went round setting fire to 20 houses and a few haystacks, stealing some goats and throwing a few into the fire alive. The attacks spread into the adjoining areas of Vasudevanallur and Sivagiri where Muslims were also attacked. A few cases of arson were also reported in the villages bordering Ramnad district. Haystacks belonging to the Harijans of Chenthattipuram village were destroyed. Suspecting it to be the act of the Thevars of Kunnakudi village in Ramnad district, the Harijans of Chenthattiapuram set fire to the haystacks of Maravas and stoned their houses.

The only loss suffered by the Maravas as a consequence of the Puliangudi conflicts was the murder of Velusami Thevar, a young man from Thiampatti village in Sivagiri Taluk. He is believed to have been murdered by a section of the Harijans of Chintamani village, near Puliangudi on the June 10 and buried in the nearby Vallaneri village burial ground.

The apparent causes for the Maravas' attack on the Harijan hamlets of Ayyapuram, Vellagoundenpatti and Muthusamypuram

are the refusal of Harijans at Puliangudi to allow the *Gnana Ratham* to enter their quarters, the Chokkampatti incidents and the looting of a textile shop at Puliangudi belonging to a Chokkampatti Thevar.

Another provocation was perhaps the 'inflammatory' speech by Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, President of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) at the SSS public meeting at Kadayanallur on June 8. Referring to the attack on Harijans at Chokkampatti, Sait is said to have observed that the SSS need not fear anti-social elements if both Muslims and Harijans stood united and by doing so they could become a power to be reckoned with. Perhaps these 'encouraging' words must have 'inspired' the already infuriated Harijans to loot the Thevar shop at Puliangudi, in retaliation, which set off a chain of incidents affecting the Harijans.

But, why did the Thevars attack Ayyapuram and not Puliangudi? The causes for the Ayyapuram carnage and wanton destruction, looting and arson in other Harijan hamlets cannot be explained away by only referring to the *Gnana Ratham*, the Chokkampatti incident, the looting of a Thevar shop and the 'provocative' speech of Sulaiman Sait. The causes are much deeper and need to be examined in some detail. One reason was, perhaps, 'locational'. The caste Hindus who were determined to teach the Harijans a lesson found that the Harijans of Puliangudi were too close to the police station. For the caste Hindus, it had to be a ruthless butchering and total destruction of an entire Harijan village, the ruins of which would serve as a warning to the 'arrogant' and 'defiant' Harijans. And this was possible only in an isolated village like Ayyapuram, difficult for other Harijans and police to reach quickly. Further, Harijans of Ayyapuram and Vellagoundenpatti, because of their relative independence, are accused of 'arrogance' and 'defiance' to the Maravas in the neighbouring villages. It was, indeed, a calculated and pre-planned outrage. The irony is that the Harijans of these two hamlets were mostly Christians. But Harijans are Harijans and the Ayyapuram Harijans were made the sacrificial goats. The sole purpose of this brutal attack on Ayyapuram was to convey the message in no unmistakable terms to all the Harijans in that region that they better 'behave themselves' and not 'revolt' or 'convert to Islam'.

Another reason was the long-standing enmity between the Harijans of Ayyapuram and the Maravas. An early issue of conflict with the Maravas was the diversion of irrigation water, originally used by the Harijans, to the Thevar lands. A more important reason seems to lie in the fact that the Harijans of Ayyapuram are definitely economically better-off—nearly 100 families own lands and a few use pump sets to irrigate their lands. During lean and off seasons, they migrate to Kerala or Madras in search of work. Educationally some of them are quite advanced and exposed to the influence of urbanisation; they are fairly conversant with the politics of their district and are neither dependent nor submissive any more to the Maravas. For instance, they would not get down from the cycle when they passed through neighbouring Vellagoundenpatti, a Marava village and wear chappals while passing through this village. They have also put an end to the age old degrading customs of Harijans having to dig graves for the deceased caste Hindus of the village and shave their heads, which they, the Harijans, were forced to perform as a part of their duty and as a mark of 'respect'. The Harijans of Vellagoundenpatti have also stopped performing these degrading customs. Though they are a minority in the village, they own lands and a few are as economically well off as the Thevars. In fact, the landholding Harijans employ Maravas of their village for their farm work.

In the case of Muthusamypuram also, the attack was partly due to the jealousy of Maravas who were unable to stomach the Harijans becoming economically better off. About 30 years ago the Harijan residents of Muthusamypuram used to live in Avudaiyapuram. Unable to bear the cruelties of the caste Hindus in Avudaiyapuram they migrated to Muthusamypuram. Today they are reasonably well off owning cultivable lands, pump sets, cattle, etc., which they have acquired through their hard work and government loans.

However, the Puliangudi conflicts cannot be explained merely as the traditional Marava-Harijan rivalry. No doubt, even in the best of times, the triangle formed by Vasudevanallur, Puliangudi and Sankaranayanarkoil is a crime-prone area where gruesome murders are not uncommon. The simmering discontent between the dominant Maravas and the 'weak' and 'submissive' Harijans

who necessarily had to depend upon the Maravas for their livelihood, erupted into occasional skirmishes. But can we explain the recent attacks on Harijans as one of those 'expected' occasional outbursts or should we look for basic causes which would explain this seemingly frenzied (but, in fact, pre-planned) attack on Harijans?

One fact is very obvious. Harijans had to pay very dearly for daring to break their shackles and turning increasingly to the Muslims for support. The Harijan-Muslim friendship had aroused fear and anger in the minds of caste Hindus, more so because of the fear of a repetition of the Meenakshipuram conversions. However, the caste Hindus here, like in several other regions, did not have the courage to attack the Muslims directly and openly, and so the Harijans who had aligned with the Muslims were made the scape-goats. Attacks were made not only on 'dissident' Harijans who had joined hands with Muslims but even on other Harijans who were opposed to their activities.

In a sense, the Meenakshipuram conversions were the starting point of this type of caste-communal attack on Harijans. The relations between Harijans and caste Hindus had been none too good even before but rapidly deteriorated since then. Nothing positive was done to redress the grievances that prompted the Harijans to embrace Islam and no attempt was made to check and tone down the growing hostility between the different communities. For quite some time, tensions had been building up in the Puliangudi-Kadayanallur area and leaders on both sides, caste Hindus and Muslims voiced statements of a highly provocative nature to gain political advantage for themselves. In short, the Puliangudi conflicts and Ayyapuram carnage were the result of a polarisation of caste and communal forces in that area.

As early as March 12, 1982 a non-Harijan bus driver was said to have beaten up a Harijan youth driving a bullock cart on the grounds that the latter had obstructed the bus. This incident resulted in a clash between Thevars and Harijans in Kammapacheri near Kadayanallur. Kattari Pandian a Thevar bigwig and DMK leader was beaten up by the Harijans. After this incident Harijans in Puliangudi lowered the party flags and hoisted the green and red

flag.¹² Towards the last week of April, Shahul Hameed and his brother Rifayee addressed the Harijans at Puliangudi. It was here that the idea of starting the SSS was initially mooted. The two brothers visited the neighbouring villages, met the Harijan leaders, planned and conducted a series of SSS meetings and common feast for Muslims and Harijans. On May 2, there was a clash between Harijans and caste Hindus at Puliangudi following a quarrel between a Harijan and an employee of the local cinema theatre. Following these 'provocations' caste Hindu leaders and elders met, irrespective of their political differences and affiliations, and decided to hoist the *OM*¹³ flag. So, all of a sudden one found in Puliangudi, Kadayanallur and a few nearby villages the various party flags pulled down and replaced by the two other flags—one, saffron coloured and the other, green and red.

The hoisting of the *OM* flag in the caste Hindu areas clearly indicates the silent but effective work accomplished by the RSS for quite some time. Drills and training were conducted for the RSS volunteers regularly at Puliangudi, Kadayanallur and in a few nearby villages. The RSS had been indulging in communal propaganda in the area for more than a year. Whereas the role of the RSS was direct and its provocation open, in the communal riots in Kanyakumari district, the hand of the RSS was subtle and unnoticed in the Puliangudi incidents. In fact, VHP, its front organisation has been vigorously active in the interior areas of Tirunelveli district since the Meenakshipuram conversions in 1981. The strategy of the RSS is to unite the Hindus of all castes including the Harijans, if it can manage it, to fight for political power. The most disturbing feature of its apparent success is that it was able to effect polarisation, transcending traditional party loyalties of the population of the affected towns and villages on entirely communal lines. It is significant that the leading role in this polarisation process had been played by the RSS. For instance, the organising Secretary of the Tamil Nadu VHP, S. Vedantam, sees in the incident in Puliangudi and neighbouring villages 'vested interests which amassed wealth by converting Harijans to other

¹² This is the caste flag of the scheduled castes who had formed the *Devandra Kula Sangam*.

¹³ This saffron coloured flag with *OM* inscribed on it is, in fact, the flag used by an RSS front organisation.

faiths (and) which found in it (the *Gnana Ratham*) a hurdle of their smooth operations'.¹⁴ Ramagopalan, convener of the *Hindu Munnani*, took exception to the formation of the SSS. He alleged that this organisation was dividing the Hindus and indirectly fomenting communalism.

While it is true that the RSS men commenced their disruptive activities in this area ever since the Meenakshipuram conversions, the Muslim leaders have also been very active. They made a special effort to win over the Harijans for their own political advantage. Sulaiman Sait's speech at the SSS meeting at Kadayannallur on June 8 is quite revealing; he appealed to the Harijans to join with the Muslim League to enable them to become a powerful political force in Tamil Nadu.

Though the Puliangudi conflicts have been largely engineered by caste/communal forces in Tamil Nadu the economic issues in these incidents should not be completely ignored. The statement of Mohammed Ibrahim, the President of the Puliangudi Merchants Association is revealing. He claimed that 'the present troubles were instigated by the RSS men who could not bear to see the prosperity of the Muslims and had wanted to ruin their trade and agriculture'.¹⁵ Neither could the Maravas stand the small economic gains made by the Harijans in terms of cultivable lands and other assets over the years in Puliangudi, Ayyapuram, Muthusampuram and Vellagoundenpatti.

SECTION III

The total population of Tirunelveli district (meaning the Sacred Paddy Hedge) was 32,00,515 in 1971* and has risen to 35,73,751 according to the 1981 census. 55.9% comprise the Backward Classes, 15.8% are Scheduled Castes (S.Cs) and 7% are Muslims. In terms of religious composition, Hindus account for 80.5%, Christians 12.5% and Muslims 7%. The literacy rate of the district is 44.8% while that of the S.Cs. is 26%. The Pallans are the largest sub caste accounting for 52% of the S.Cs.

¹⁴ *The Statesman*, June 13, 1982.

¹⁵ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XVII, No. 25 (June 19, 1982), p. 1006.

* All statistics used in this paper are based on the 1971 census unless otherwise stated.

The percentage of workers to total population is 36.6% ; of this 24.8% (2,90,738) are cultivators and 30.8% (3,60,787) are agricultural labourers. The total S.C. working population in Tirunelveli is 2,31,693 accounting for 19.8% of the total work force. This is higher than the percentage of S.C. population to the total population of the district which is 15.8%. 53,835 (23.2%) of S.C. workers are cultivators which is almost the same as the total cultivator percentage (24.8). Of a total of 2,90,738 cultivators in Tirunelveli, 53,835 or 18.5% are S.Cs which again is higher than the S.C. population to total population. (Of course, we must bear in mind that the size of land holdings and supplementary resources of S.C. cultivators are much less than the non S.C. cultivators.)

S.C. agricultural labourers in Tirunelveli number 1,36,637 or 58% of the S.C. working population whereas for the general population 30.8%, a much lower percentage, eke out their livelihood through agricultural labour, thereby indicating the extent of poverty that a large percentage of S.Cs are in. What is more striking is that of this 30.8% (3,60,787) of agricultural labourers in the district, 37.9% are from the S.Cs. This is more than double when compared to the population (15.8%) revealing that amongst the most poorly paid employment agricultural labour) S.Cs constitute the single largest group.

Nadars and Maravas are the most populous castes in Tirunelveli followed by Scheduled Castes, Vellalas, Paravas, (fishermen) and others, Telugu speaking castes like Naickers and Reddiars. Maravas and Kallars, generally called Thevars are dominant communities in South Tamil Nadu. During the British Raj they were at one time called 'Criminal' tribes. But, since 1911, they were termed as Denotified Tribes. By application of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1911, they along with other criminal tribes, are brought under police surveillance and after several years, released from such surveillance and were thereafter known as denotified tribes. The Maravars are made up largely of small and middle peasants and agricultural labourers. Though 'socially' higher in the caste hierarchy than even Nadars, and once were proud warriors known for their martial valour being members of the organised armies of chieftains, today they are largely uneducated and backward.

According to the report of the Backward Classes Commission, Tamil Nadu, 1970, 'it looks obvious that the Maravas of Tirunelveli and elsewhere have not made much progress in education and in gaining employment as even the Kallars have made, though even the Kallars' progress is by no means impressive. A sense of discontent and frustration prevails amongst the Maravas'.

The Harijans, once their agricultural menials, have begun to advance through education and government benefits. The Marava control over them has declined year by year resulting in numerous atrocities perpetrated on them in order to keep them under their control. In fact, 'in December 1930 the Kallar in Ramnad propounded eight prohibitions, the disregard of which led to the use of violence by the Kallar against the exterior castes, whose huts were fired, whose granaries and property were destroyed, and whose livestock was looted.

These eight prohibitions were as follows :

- '(i) that the Adi-Dravidas shall not wear ornaments of gold and silver ;
- '(ii) that the males should not be allowed to wear their clothes below their knees or above the hips ;
- '(iii) that their males should not wear coats or shirts or banyans ;
- '(iv) no Adi-Dravida shall be allowed to have his hair cropped ;
- '(v) that the Adi-Dravidas should not use other than earthenware vessels in their homes ;
- '(vi) their women shall not be allowed to cover the upper portions of their bodies by clothes or *ravukais* or *thavanies* ;
- '(vii) their women shall not be allowed to use flowers or saffron paste ; and
- '(viii) the men shall not use umbrellas for protection against sun and rain nor should they wear sandals.'

In June 1931, the eight prohibitions not having been satisfactorily observed by the exterior castes in question, the Kallar met together and framed eleven prohibitions, which went still

further than the original eight, and an attempt to enforce these led to more violence'.¹⁶

Further, the Thevars have seen the merchant Nadar community upon whom they look with contempt, rise above them in wealth and power. The longstanding Maravar-Shanar feud, mostly socio-economic in origin took a political turn in 1957 resulting in arson, murder and police fire casualties ; one of the worst caste riots of all times. 'Nadars or the Shanars as they were formerly known are concentrated predominantly south of the Tambraparni river, which crosses Tirunelveli district roughly from Ambasamudram to just south of Tuticorin on the west Traditionally toddy tappers by occupation, defiled by their ritually-impure calling, the Nadars were forbidden entry into Hindu temples, wells were strictly forbidden to their use ; they were denied the right to carry an umbrella, to wear shoes, golden ornaments, to milk cows, to walk in certain streets ; and their women were forbidden to cover their breasts. Indeed, a Nadar could not even approach a Brahmin within twenty-four paces. Considered among the most defiling and degrading of all castes, the Nadars suffered severe social disabilities and were once one of the most economically depressed communities in South India. In their response to the social and economic changes during the last century, however, the Nadars have today become one of the most economically and politically successful communities in the south. In the fields of trade and education they are unexcelled',¹⁷ and in politics, the power of K. Kamaraj 'Nadar' helped them consolidate their political strength.

Puliangudi, classified as an urban agglomeration (Municipal Corporation) is about 25 km from Tenkasi and is part of Sivagiri Sub-Taluk. Sivagiri was the headquarters of an old *zamindar*. It was also the scene of several battles between the *zamindar* entitled *Poligar* and the East India Company. Of the total population of 38,742 in Puliangudi, Hindus number 30,212 (77.9%) Muslims 6,446 (17.2%) and Christians 2083 (5.4%). The two

¹⁶ J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, O.U.P., Bombay, Fourth Edition, 1963, p. 205.

¹⁷ Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., 'Political participation and Primordial Solidarity, The Nadars of Tamil Nadu,' in Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics*, p. 105.

dominant castes are Thevars (Maravars) and Nadars. The Scheduled Castes account for 17% (6584) of the total population.

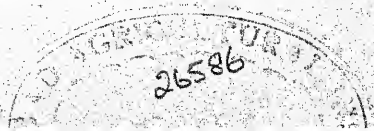
The Muslims and the S.Cs together total 13,030 (34%) of the total population in Puliangudi. This strength is important to note because it is much higher here than for the percentage of S.C—Muslim population for the whole of Tirunelveli which is only 23% (15.8% + 7%). The Muslim population in Puliangudi (17.2%) is much higher than the Tirunelveli percentage (7%) or the Tamil Nadu percentage (5.1%). The trade in Puliangudi is controlled by the Muslims, they also own large tracts of land in and around Puliangudi. Weaving is also an important occupation for a large number of them. In a sense, the town economy of Puliangudi is dominated by the Muslim community.

The total number of literate persons in Puliangudi are 14,182 (36.6%) which is much higher than the literacy rate of the S.Cs (24.7%) in Puliangudi. The total number of workers in Puliangudi are 17,171 i.e. 44.3% of the total population. The percentage of S.C. workers to total S.C. population is 51.6 with the S.C. workers accounting for 19.8% (3396) of the total work force. Cultivators in Puliangudi number 2,521 (14.6%) of the working population. S.C. cultivators number 531 or 15.6% of S.C. workers (indicating a slightly higher cultivator component among the S.C. than for the general population) and 21% of the total cultivators (2521) in Puliangudi. This percentage (21%) is higher than the Tirunelveli district figure of 18.5% indicating that relatively more number of Harijans in Puliangudi own land holdings, however small the holdings may be. The total number of agricultural labourers in Puliangudi are 5,584 (32.5%) of the work force. S.C. agricultural labourers account for 2,278 (67%) of the S.C. work force and 40% of all the agricultural labourers. The percentage of S.C. agricultural labourers to the S.C. working population is much higher (67%) than the percentage of general agricultural labourers (32.5%) to the total work force. These figures on Puliangudi indicate three main points. First, two thirds of the S.C. working population still eke out a living on agricultural wages. Secondly, more than 80% of the S.C. labour force depend solely on agricultural activities (cultivation and agricultural labour) whereas only 47% of the non-S.C. workers depend on these activities. Thirdly, 41.9%

of the non-Harijan workers are employed in non-agricultural activities (Household industry (26.6%), manufacturing (7.4%) and trade and commerce (8 %). Whereas for the S.Cs only 7.2% of the workers are employed in these three categories (5.88%, 0.6% and 0.67% respectively) indicating that a very minimal of the S.C. labour force find employment outside agricultural activities.

Ayyapuram has a total population of 584 more than 90 % of whom are Harijans. This predominantly S.C. village has a rather high literacy rate (41.6%), definitely much higher than the S.C. and general population literacy rates in Puliangudi of only 24.6% and 36.6% respectively. A total of 265 are workers of which 87 (32.8%) are cultivators. This percentage is much higher than S.C. cultivator percentage to S.C. workers of Puliangudi which is only 15.6% or higher than the general Puliangudi percentage of cultivators to working population which is 14.6%. Further, out of a total of 531 S.C. cultivators in Puliangudi 87 are in Ayyapuram (16.4%). Thus, 8.3% of the S.Cs of Puliangudi (who live in Ayyapuram) account for 16.38% of the S.C. cultivators. This is a definite indication of Ayyapuram S.Cs being relatively better off (in terms of land at least) than the other S.Cs in Puliangudi. At the other end, we see that agricultural labourers in Ayyapuram account for 65 (24.5%) of the working population which is even less than the number of cultivators (87). This is terribly lower than the S.C. agricultural labour among S.C. workers in Puliangudi which is as high as 67% indicating that the Harijans in Ayyapuram are definitely better off, economically at least, than the Harijans in Puliangudi as a whole. During the off season they migrate to the city of Madras or to Kerala for work. These factors suggest that they do not predominantly depend on caste Hindu landowners for work.

Looking back at the events and activities of the two opposing groups in this area over the past one year—the caste Hindus, from Brahmins, Vellalas, Maravas, Moopanars to Nadars, quietly but efficiently organised and deftly led by the RSS leadership and its Front organisations and the Muslim-Harijan combine, led by the Muslim political elites all in the name of the SSS—it is suggested that the caste/communal tensions and conflicts between these two should be viewed as the political mobilisation on the part



of the RSS and the Muslim League for political power. The RSS used both caste and religion as idioms or means for mobilisation. The Muslim League used the anti-Marava sentiments among the Harijans putting forward in contrast the idiom of egalitarianism and brotherhood to win them over.

For the RSS, the issue of the Government's Reservation Policy, namely, the special concessions and privileges given to the Scheduled Castes, the possibility of conversion of Harijans to Islam in this area following the Meenakshipuram conversions in 1981 and also the recent communal clashes at Kanyakumari district came in very handy as effective propaganda material to influence and win over the caste Hindus and escalate the hostility towards Harijans and Muslims. The extent of success of the RSS strategy can be gauged from the fact that they were able to sink (temporarily at least) the traditional rivalry and hatred of the Nadars for the Maravas and get them to support the Maravas against the Muslims and the Harijans. Traditionally enemies for long, the feuds between Nadars and Thevars had caused innumerable sufferings on both sides, brutal murders and wanton destruction of property for both the communities during the past one century. The RSS was able to project a false impression in the minds of caste Hindus that the Muslims were bent on converting the poor Harijans to Islam and make Tirunelveli into a Muslim district, or at least, a Muslim dominant district. The RSS had started training programmes, drills and cadre building a few months earlier in Puliangudi, other towns and in the neighbouring villages also. The RSS propaganda seems to have made a deep impression on the caste Hindus. The rabidly anti-Muslim sentiment expressed by the caste Hindu residents of Puliangudi was very revealing. One could clearly see the hand of the RSS in this ; the seeds of hatred against the Muslims were very cleverly sown in the minds of these ordinary people and they voiced these anti-Muslim feelings parrot-like. The use of Lord Subramania by the VHP's *Gnana Ratham* in Tirunelveli district was a clever move on the part of the RSS to touch on religious susceptibilities of the caste Hindus in Tirunelveli.

Whereas the RSS organised the caste Hindus using these idioms rather covertly, the Muslim leaders operated rather openly, organis-

ing well publicised meetings with Harijans and feasting with them during the summer months of 1982. They were cautious about not discussing conversion to Islam but articulated concepts like equality, brotherhood, etc. This worked well because the Harijans had already started defying the caste Hindus and protesting against the oppression meted out to them. Naturally they were looking for allies to strengthen their hands and when the Muslim leaders broached the idea of the SSS, the Harijans were only too happy to be associated with it.

The goal for these two groups is to share or control political power at local as well as at the state and national level. However, it must be pointed out that the Muslim cannot aspire to capture political power either at the state or national level (even though they can, at the local level, wherever they have their 'pockets' of influence). At best, they can act as a pressure group at the state legislature as in Kerala. Naturally, in keeping with the ambitions of achieving a greater say in Tamil Nadu politics the Muslim political elites would try to take advantage of the social oppression experienced by the Harijans at the hands of caste Hindus and convince them of their need to quit Hinduism and embrace Islam; at the least to join them and other minorities in their fight against Hindu chauvinism and dominance in Indian politics. The pronouncements of Abdus Samad, President of the Tamil Nadu unit of the I.U.M.L. in recent times and the speech of Sulaiman Sait, the All India President, at Kadayanallur on June 8 give credence to the view that they would like to play a crucial role in Tamil Nadu politics. At present, the I.U.M.L. is only playing fiddle to either MGR or Karunanidhi.¹⁸ They would like to play an independent role with the help of Harijans and other minorities.

On the contrary, the goal of the RSS is much more ambitious and hence more dangerous. Its ultimate aim is to seize political power at the centre and convert India into 'Hindu India'. The RSS, with its image of being dominated by North Indian and Brahmin leadership and supported by the theme of Hindi as national language has had to adopt a low profile in 'Dravidian'

¹⁸ M.G. Ramachandran is the present chief minister of Tamil Nadu, founder of the *All India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam*.

M. Karunanidhi is a former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, President of the *Dravida Munetra Kazhagam*, the main opposition party in Tamil Nadu.

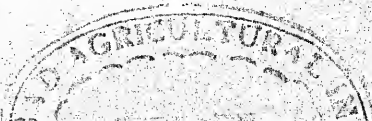
Tamil Nadu which has a long history of Dravidian movement with its 'rationalist', anti-North, anti-Hindi and anti-Brahmin propaganda. So, it has had to adapt itself to survive in the peculiar 'Tamil Culture' and 'Dravidian' ideology before it could make any progress. It is precisely for these reasons that the RSS was forced to confine itself to using popular Hindu symbols suited to the Tamil people (Lord Subramania), innocuous looking but dangerous Hindu revivalist fronts and youth fronts and attacking the Reservation Policy of the government for the Schedules Castes which, they presume, would unite all the non-Harijan castes against the Harijans.

Meenakshipuram conversions were an unexpected boon to the RSS. It harped on the evils of conversions, the influence of foreign (Arab) money, etc., and this propaganda worked. The proximity (Meenakshipuram is only about 25 kms from Puliangudi) of Meenakshipuram and the fear of Harijans in the Kadayanallur-Puliangudi belt joining Islam *en masse* after the formation of the SSS helped the RSS to whip up Hindu fanaticism. Till recently, the Tamils, by and large, looked upon the RSS with suspicion; in fact, the non-Brahmin Tamils looked down upon the RSS, thanks to the influence of the Dravidian Movement spanning over 50 years, in Tamil Nadu, especially the untiring work of EVR and the Self-Respect Movement.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the RSS was legitimised in Tamil Nadu thanks to the Emergency regime of Indira Gandhi and the formation of the Janata Party just prior to the 1977 General Elections. Till then, the RSS was mainly confined to the Brahmin quarters in the city of Madras and a few other big towns. But Emergency made the RSS workers heroes; many of them were detained during the Emergency. Jan Sangh as a political party in Tamil Nadu was inconsequential till 1977. The Janata in Tamil Nadu really meant only the Congress(O). When the Jan Sangh became a constituent of the Janata, it attained respectability over night. This was a golden opportunity for the RSS to infiltrate the Janata. To make the RSS respectable, Rangasamy Thevar was made the chief of RSS in Tamil Nadu. Thanulinga Nadar, a former Congress M.P. from Kanyakumari was made the President of the *Hindu Munnani* unit in Kanyakumari district during the com-

¹⁹ E. V. Ramasami (Periyar) was the father of the Self-Respect and Dravidian Movement.

munal clashes there, mainly to get the support of Hindu Nadars. The RSS in Tamil Nadu is forced to use a symbol which would unite all the Hindus and so naturally, it talks of safeguarding Hindu religion from the anti-God *Dravida Kazhagam* (D.K.) and from the Muslim 'fanatics'. This has helped to attract the non-Brahmins to its ranks. (Incidentally, an important reason for the success of the RSS in this regard and the growing influence of Brahmins (who run the various RSS front organisations) on the non-Brahmin Hindu opinion, show the weakness of the Dravidian Movement ; the crude strategy adopted by the present D.K. leadership to attack the RSS is turning out to be counter-productive.)

The Muslim League leaders have chosen this area for befriending the Harijans because the Muslim population in Puliangudi, Kadayanallur, Tenkasi, Vasudevanallur is quite high, much higher than the average Muslim population in the district ; and the Puliangudi area falls under the Reserved Constituency ; suggesting a high percentage of Harijan population in this area. It is interesting to note that the Harijans have their representatives, Krishnan from the Reserved Assembly Constituency of Vasudevanallur and Arunachalam as M.P. from Tenkasi Lok Sabha Constituency and the Muslims have Shahul Hameed and Abubecker, MLAs representing the Kadayanallur and Tenkasi Assembly Constituencies. This seemingly oversized representation of the Muslims and the S.Cs from this area is also an irritant for the caste Hindus. The positive side of Muslims' support for Harijans in the form of SSS is that it has helped the Harijans to organise themselves better ; perhaps it has given them courage to challenge the landed caste Hindus. Moreover, Harijans of this area seem to be politically awakened and are quite aware of their problems, the contributive factor being the 'exposure' they have had when they migrate to Kerala and to Madras city in search of work during the lean seasons. The experience of the organised strength of agricultural, construction and plantation workers in Kerala and also the ethos of urban life during their stay had helped them to understand and act against domination in their local situation. Government facilities and concessions, ownership of land and education have also contributed to the Harijans being able to assert their rights. Naturally they refused to perform the degrading jobs of digging graves and shaving their heads. This amounted to 'revolt' in the eyes of the



Maravas who had controlled the lives of these Harijans for ages. In fact, Puliangudi has been enumerated as an urban agglomeration. To make it a municipality, neighbouring villages and hamlets like Ohintamani, Vellagoundenpatti and Ayyapuram were included within the municipal limits. As a result, the Harijans in Ayyapuram and Vellagoundenpatti have had the experience of enjoying and demanding certain civic amenities under municipal administration and this experience has created an awareness among them. Further, their leaders have had experience of municipal administration and political mobilisation at the local level.

Another 'local' factor which might have emboldened the Harijans of Puliangudi to act as they have done was the fact that one young Harijan from the Harijan colony of Puliangudi is in the Indian Police Service (IPS) and was a Superintendent of Police at nearby Madurai. In a sense, Rajendran IPS, personified the aspirations of Harijans in the area and he became the Harijan symbol of prestige and the height to which a Harijan could rise by his own effort and hard work.

The foregoing description of the Puliangudi incidents, and the Ayyapuram killings also gives us an idea of the difference between the operation of party politics and communal/caste politics. One fact stands out very clearly; in a crisis situation (caste/communal clashes) party politics comes to naught and caste/communal politics, which is ever present, comes into play in its true colour. In fact party politics cannot but disappear during a crisis. It will reinstate itself in a commanding position after the crisis blows over through 'peace committees', where party leaders vie with each other in stressing the need for peace, meagre rehabilitation measures, statements of mutual accusation and slander, etc. This happens because political leaders are forced to use caste as a category for political mobilisation; no political party can afford to antagonise any caste groupings, more so, when a particular caste is numerically strong and/or dominant in an area. So, the strategy followed by these power elites is to keep off from crisis situations. Even if, circumstances force them to make statements they pronounce very equivocal ones, appealing for 'peace'.

Since most of the clashes today are on social issues—the practice of untouchability, caste oppression, issues of religious nature,

(processions, conventions, installing of statues), etc., political parties and local administration are unable to intervene in any constructive manner because of the peculiar nature of their vote and power bases and the caste/religious appeal. However, in issues related to economic activities the political power elites do interfere, often emphatically and enforce their views. Even here, they often would weigh how a particular policy would affect a particular caste/religious group.

Party politics at the village level is active, in fact, comes alive largely during electoral politics. During elections, people's feelings and political attitudes are influenced by political parties and their elites. But in day-to-day affairs of a village or town, it is communal or caste politics that are in command. These get reflected in the village or in small urban centres not only in caste/communal carnages, clashes and propaganda but also in other political institutions, be they the Panchayat or Municipal elections, elections to a board of management of a school or a co-operative society, or in 'justice' meted out by the institutions of 'law and order', Judiciary and other economic organisations. In regard to caste/religious issues, the political power elites would step in, not as party men but as caste leaders or religious 'elders'. In many instances it is quite difficult to find out whether the power elites act in their capacity as political forces or as caste or religious powers. More often than not, their influence, judgements and pronouncements are based on their castes and/or religion rather than party affiliation or class identity.

In conclusion, when we discuss communal/caste conflicts it is important to remember that the 'ordinary' Marava, Harijan or Nadar has no deep antagonism and hatred towards each other. Jealousy, caste hatred psyche, religious fanaticism and the resultant urge to attack the conjured up enemies are whipped up by the political elites in their mobilisation for power and control. The RSS and the Muslim League did this for their own political advantage at Puliangudi.*

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SOCIAL ORIGIN OF COMMUNAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN KERALA

GEORGE MATHEW

The political stirrings which happened in the princely state of Travancore was a trend setter for the later political developments in the Kerala state. One of the important characteristics of the political process in that state is the powerful influence each community has in the affairs of the government. This paper is an attempt to look at the social setting of Travancore and to see under what conditions the principal communities organised themselves to demand their social, economic and political rights. The social process was one in which different communities competed for modern instruments of status and power. Their instrumentality was the traditional loyalties of the people; kinship, caste, neighbourhood, territory, religion, ethnicity, etc. articulated in terms of religious sentiments which can be termed 'primordial collectivism'.¹

19th Century Social Structure

The Travancore society was highly stratified, economically and socially in the 19th century. Land was the main factor of production. Land determined one's economic position, social status and consequently political power. Trade and business were also significant economic activities. Government jobs were few but it had a greater attraction as it provided power and status in society. It is interesting to note here that it was on the question of the share in the government job that the first political agitation took place in the State of Travancore.

The economic activity as a whole was not dynamic enough to generate surpluses or economic mobility. It was more or less static. Therefore, the disparities between haves and have-nots,

¹ Primordial collectivism is a term used by T. K. Oommen in his study of Agrarian labour unions in Kerala. See T. K. Oommen, 'Problems of Building Agrarian Organisations in Kerala', *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. XXVI, 3, 1976, p. 186.

landed gentry and landless poor, those who controlled business and others, those who had access to government and those who had not, were rather big. Essentially it was a 'feudal' society.²

However, the Travancore economy was being brought nearer to national and international market economy by the middle of the 19th century. The industries, the plantations, the public works were the first signs of organised economic activity which were capable of challenging the feudal structure.

Socially, the caste hierarchy determined one's position in society. Social status was ascriptive. Purity and pollution divided the society and at the same time sustained it. Hindu, Christian and Muslim were the three major religious communities in Travancore at the turn of the present century. The Hindu community was sharply divided on caste lines that it had seldom any social intercourse. Each caste and its sub-castes were endogamous units. Among the Hindus, Nairs (18.92%) and Ezhavas (21.54%) were the most populous two 'communities'.³ They had the potentiality of becoming rivals at the end of the 19th century involving their primordial ties because of several reasons. Nairs were ritually superior in the caste hierarchy. They were landlords and constituted the bulk of the militia of the princely states. They had access to government jobs and modern education. But Ezhavas had none of these advantages. The only plus factor was that they were numerically superior to Nairs. Therefore, it was not surprising that these two Hindu castes behaved as if they belonged to entirely different religious communities. The fact

² 'Feudal' as an analytical concept comes from Marx. Whether 'feudal' can be applied to Indian pre-capitalist society is a debatable point. Marx has used 'Asiatic' or 'Ancient' to denote the mode of production that existed in pre-capitalist India. See Daniel Thorner, 'Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, No. IX, December 1966, pp. 36-66.

³ Nairs had claimed that they are not a caste but a race (cf. K. M. Panikkar, *History of Kerala 1498-1801*). At the end of the 19th century, in the emerging new set up the educated middle class protested against Nairs being treated by Brahmins as Sudras. They said that Nairs do not form a caste and that 'they are a community'. See R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Social Structure and Political Development in Kerala*, Trivandrum: The Kerala Academy of Political Science, 1976, p. 18. In this paper we will be treating Nairs and Ezhavas as two distinct communities, within the Hindu-fold having their own distinct features and characteristics (Endogamous units).

that they were part of the over-arching Hinduism could not make them see eye to eye, except at very brief periods. Of course, this is a problem of all castes within Hinduism. Touchability and untouchability, distance pollution in various degrees determined the stratification in Travancore. Technically, Christians were outside this caste hierarchy but in practice a system of inclusion and exclusion was developed *vis-a-vis* the caste system. They were powerful in agriculture, business and trade and they constituted almost 25 per cent of the population of Travancore. On 15 September 1887, the Christian newspaper *Nazrani Deepika* had argued that $\frac{1}{4}$ of *Sirkar* (Government) jobs should be given to Christians. Outside the Hindu fold, Christians (20.6%) were the most powerful community in Travancore. Muslims (6.21%) were numerically and economically not a match to Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians.

The story of Travancore society since 1891 is the story of the competing demands of the Nair, Ezhava and Christian communities for a larger share in the cake—that of the resources and power of the state. It meant demand for greater opportunities in *Sirkar* services and proper representation in the legislative assembly. Other religious communities or castes or sub-castes were only marginals in this game of power till the Kerala State was formed in 1956. After 1965, Muslims also became powerful contenders. Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians used the marginal communities according to convenience for or against each other. This struggle for wealth, status and power in a relatively small plural community provides us with fascinating sociological insights. Here, a brief look at the dominant communities in Travancore will be in order.

Brahmins

Brahmins were at the apex of the social hierarchy. There were several groups among the Brahmins and the pre-eminence was to Namboodiris—the Malayali Brahmins. (*Nambu* means sacred or trustworthy and *tiri* means 'a light'. Therefore *Namboodiri* is a sacred light). Traditionally people believe that Namboodiris were brought to Kerala by Parasu Rama from the banks of the Narmada, the Krishna and the Cauvery. According to Nagam Aiya the bulk of them came from the region between Krishna and

Godavari rivers.⁴ Padmanabha Menon supports this view.⁵ Among the Namboodiris, there are eight sub-divisions, four of them are called Vedic and four non-Vedic.⁶ They were rich land holders and as Edgar Thurston puts it, 'the aristocracy of the land'.⁷ Most of the temples were under their control. Nagam Aiya gives an account of the high social position of Namboodiris. Tenants bow down to him not only as their landlord but as their royal lineage, benefactor, household diety, their very god on earth. 'His person is holy; his directions are commands; his movements are processions; his meal is nectar; he is holiest of human beings; he is the representative of God on earth.'⁸ A British missionary writer whose observations on the social system are considered authentic, puts the situation thus: 'His word is law, his smile confers happiness and salvation; his power with heaven is unlimited; the very dust of his feet is purifying in its nature and efficacy. Each is an infallible Pope in his own sphere.'⁹ Because of this the entire social customs were planned to suit their pleasures in life. Their relationship with Nair women through *talikettu* and *sambandham*¹⁰ is a case in point. Since they held land and kings

⁴ V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, 1906.

⁵ K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. I, Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1924, p. 43.

⁶ The 8 sub-divisions according to the Jathi Nirnaya are: (1) Tampurakkal, (2) Adhyan, (3) Visishta Brahmin, (4) Samanya Brahmin, (5) Jathi Matreyan, (6) Samketikan, (7) Sampagrasthan and (8) Papisthan. Some writers like N. Subramanya Aiyar take note of only 5 sub-divisions: (1) Tampurakkal, (2) Adhyan, (3) Visistha Brahmin, (4) Samanya Brahmin and (5) Jati Matreyan: See K. Tulaseedharan, *Studies in Traditional Kerala Society*, Trivandrum, College Book House, 1977, p. 26.

⁷ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V, Madras Government Press, 1909, p. 157.

⁸ Census Report 1874-75, p. 191, quoted by William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. I. Madras Government Press, 1887, p. 127.

⁹ Samuel Mateer, *Land of Charity*, London: John Snow & Co., 1871, pp. 31-32.

¹⁰ *Tali-kettu* or *Tali-kettu-kalyanam* (Tali-tying-wedding) is described as the 'Most peculiar distinctive and unique' among Malayali customs. *Tali* (a small piece of gold or other metal like a locket or a string) is tied on a girl's neck before she attains the age of puberty by a man of same or higher caste of a venerable age. This is followed by expensive feasting. When economic difficulties arose, the rite was performed on a 'group of girls' in a family. The meaning seems to be 'a token that the girl may do with herself as she pleases'. C. A., Innes *Malabar-Madras District Gazetteers*, F. B. Evans, ed., First published 1908, Madras Government Press, 1951 (reprint), p. 102.



under their control the society in Travancore in the 19th century was under the control of the 'priests'.

There were other groups also in the Brahminic category: Muttats and Elayats, Pottis in South Travancore. The foreign Brahmins or Tamil Brahmins were a distinct group attached to courts, palaces and temples. In the 19th century in Travancore, most of the posts in *Sirkar* service were held by them. There were consultants, advisers and 'notable men' in the royal courts exercising considerable influence on the rulers.

The Tamil influence came with a bang with Martanda Varma's consolidation of Travancore. His minister Ramayyan brought dependable Tamil Brahmins to administer the new territories.¹¹ Numerous *Sirkar* jobs were given to Tamil Brahmins. K. M. Panikar writes about this period, 'Martanda Varma in the interest of his dynastic ambition surrounded himself with scheming Tamilians of whom Ramayyan was the supreme type.'¹² Samuel Mateer, a keen observer of the social system of Travancore in the middle of the 19th century believes that foreign Brahmins included those settled from Canara, Mahratta and Tulu besides the Tamil areas.¹³ Non-Malayali Brahmins were the Dewans of Travancore continuously until 1877. Their population in Travancore in the 1850's was 25,000 or a little more than one per cent of the total. In the Malayali parlance they were called *Pattar*, and Nairs gave them right of sexual relationship with Nair women through marriage

Sambandham is a loose form of marriage obtaining among the castes following *marumakkathayam* which entails no responsibility of legal obligation whatever on the part of the 'husband' towards his 'wife' and children. Children belong to the same caste as their 'mothers' and not of their fathers. *Ibid.*, p. 96. However, T. K. N. Unnithan takes strong exception to this kind of an understanding of Nayar 'Marriage'. 'It would be unrealistic and unscientific to simply trace its attributes from parental or sexual activities of reproductive, complex, or to regard it as an instrument merely promoting matrilineal or matriarchal systems, or as an institution that permitted a man or woman to walk in the street and become a father or mother.' T. K. N. Unnithan, 'Contemporary Nayar Family in Kerala', in George Kurien, ed., *The Family in India—A Regional View*, The Hague—Paris: Mouton, 1974, p. 193.

¹¹ Shungoony Menon, P., *History of Travancore*, Madras: Higginbotham & Co., 1878, pp. 110-111.

¹² K. N. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala, 1498-1801*, Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1960, pp. 309-57.

¹³ Samuel Mateer, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

or outside of it. Hypergamy was practised by all upper castes. Their privilege, influence and connections were far exceeding their numbers. This did hurt and bruise the Nairs but they had to bear it till the beginning of 1890s.

Nairs

The origin of Nairs in Kerala and their matrilineal (*Marumakkathayam*—Mal.) joint family system had been a much sought after field of study for social anthropologists.¹⁴ The hypergamy and the matrilineal joint family has often been viewed as a liability than an asset when this community was about to enter the 20th century. Important literary works (novels) such as *Naalu Kettu* by M. T. Vasudevan Nair point to this fact.

The Nairs occupy an important position in the social life of Kerala. Some were rich, some serve the Namboodiris and many formed the state militia—a good number of Nairs spent time under arms. Many of them had control over their respective villages. Their family was commonly described by the term *taravad*¹⁵ which even today denotes cultural status and dignity. There are many groups and sub-groups among Nairs. According to the *Jati Nirnaya* the Nairs are divided into 18 sections. Of the 18, only the first 14 constitute high caste Nairs. The important titular suffixes of Nairs according to the caste divisions are: Pillai, Chompaka-

¹⁴ *Marumakkathayam* literally means 'Descent through sisters' children' determining the system of inheritance and of family organisation. There are a number of studies on Nair Matriliney. Among them, mention may be made of: K. Raman Unni, 'Polyandry in Malabar', 2 parts, *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 1, March 1958, pp. 62-79 and Vol. VII, No. 2, September 1958, pp. 123-33; Puthenkalam S.J., *Marriage and the Family in Kerala* with special reference to matrilineal castes; Alberta, University of Calgary, 1977; Schneider and Gough, eds., *Matrilineal Kinship*, California University Press, 1961; E. Kathaleen Gough, 'Nayars and the Definition of Marriage', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (89, 23-24, 1959); K. M. Kapadia, *Marriage and Family in India*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1959; Elankulam Kunjan Pillay, *Keralathile Iruladanja Edukal* (Mal.), Second edn., Kottayam: National Book Stall, 1952.

¹⁵ A *Taravad* is a *Marumakkathayam* joint family consisting of all the descendants of a common ancestress in the female line. *Taravad* property is a joint property of all members and each member is entitled to maintenance from it, but not entitled to claim partition. The family property is usually managed by the eldest male member, known as *Karnavan*.

raman, Thampi, Kartaavu, Kurup, Kaimal, Unnithan, Kitavu, Achan, Menon, Panikar, Naynar.

The status and honour of Nairs came from the fact that they were the militia of Travancore attached to feudal nobles. The armies raised by the kings and chiefs were engaged in fighting each other. Some rulers maintained special Nair brigades. The majority of Nairs were cultivators of land of their own. Many were tenants of temple lands and Brahmin landlords. On the top of the ladder were big landlords, but at the bottom there were landless labourers. On the whole, they had a high social position and that led them to be arrogant. As R. Ramakrishnan Nair puts it, 'Very often, being the managers and tax collectors of temples and Brahmin landlords, they were arrogant, proud and oppressive towards the lower classes including the Ezhavas.'¹⁶

The dominant social position of Nairs was rudely shocked when Marthanda Varma started the ambitious task of conquering the land under feudal chieftains. He killed chiefs of leading Nair families and the women were sold to low caste fishermen. Tamil Brahmins were given important posts in state administration but the military continued to be composed of Nairs. The coming of the British power in Travancore threw overboard all the traditional power equations centred around the palace. In fact, N. Nanu Pillai (1877-'80) was the only Nair from Travancore to hold the post of Dewan as a permanent appointment after 1817. M. Krishnan Nair Dewan (1914-'20) was from Malabar. As a result of English assistance in crushing the power of Tipu Sultan, the Government of Travancore and Cochin signed a treaty with East India Company which provided for mutual assistance in case of attack. This also meant a trading monopoly of the East India Company. It was agreed that East India Company will be represented by Residents in the courts of Travancore and Cochin. These Residents, in practice, had wider powers of political control.¹⁷ This was another blow to Nair dominance.¹⁸ The rebellion of Velu Thampi—the Nair Dewan was crushed by the British. The

¹⁶ R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁷ E. Ten Brink, *Mission of Help to the Syrian Church in Malabar 1860-1840*, Hartford (University Microfilms), High Comb : England, 1960, p. 73.

¹⁸ Kidangoor A. N. Gopalakrishna Pillai et al., eds., *Mannathinte Sampoorana Kruthikal* (Mal.), Kottayam : Vidhyarthimitram Press Book Depot, 1977, p. 16.

Dewan committed suicide and Nair soldiers were disarmed. John Munro's (Resident : 1810-'19) tenure further weakened the Nairs' social power. However, after Munro left, Nair strength in the administration increased. Robin Jeffrey is of the opinion that by 1847 Nair numerical dominance of the civil services was 'overwhelming', probably a third of Nair joint families had a relative employed in Government in some capacity.¹⁹ He bases his calculation on the number of Nair joint families as 25,000 and Nair government officials and petty officials as 8,000. In Trivandrum the Nair brigade, the state's army, provided employment for 1,500 Nairs. Of 11 posts in the *Hezur Cutcherry* in 1850, including Dewanship, Nairs held 5. They also filled 8 of the 12 important positions in the palace in 1850. The key posts in Government were held by non-Malayali Brahmins. This meant, obviously, that there were competitions for control of administration by non-Malayali Brahmins and Nairs. This led to discontent among the once dominant community. They could not tolerate the erosion of their status and power. But it did not get any expression under a powerful autocratic monarch who had the religious sanction under his command to legitimise all his deeds.

Christians

Christians in Travancore in 1891 Census numbered 526,911 (20.60%). More than half of these were known as 'Syrian Christians'²⁰ who had a long standing claim that St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Christ, brought the gospel to them in the second half of the first century of the Christian era and founded the Church in as many as seven places. The reliability of this claim has been a matter of controversy among historians.²¹ Small groups from time to time had come from Syria but Syrian Christians are predominantly Indians by social origin. L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer's *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*²² is a valuable

¹⁹ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, New Delhi : Vikas, 1978, p. 7.

²⁰ Census Report 1891. 'Syrian Christians' are thus known because they used Syriac liturgy for worship.

²¹ See K. Achyutha Menon, *Ancient Kerala Studies in its History and Culture*, Trichur, 1961, pp. 153-83 ; T. K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Trivandrum : The Government of Travancore, 1940, pp. 649-795.

²² L. K. Anantha Krishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam : Cochin Government Press, 1926.



source material on this community. He maintains that it is commonly believed that the earliest converts to Christianity in Malabar were from thirty-two Namboodiri families. In support of the belief, it is pointed out that some of the early converts bathed if they touched Nairs. T. K. Velu Pillai in the *Travancore State Manual* says :

The Syrian Christians are quite like the higher Hindu castes in complexion and in build. A few families trace their descent from Syrian immigrants but the bulk of Syrian Christians belong to the same race as the Hindus among whom they live. In the old days, some of them used to wear front tufts like their Hindu neighbours but the practice has now been completely abandoned.²³

The Christian community in Travancore comprised mainly of four sections :

1. Roman Catholics of the Syriac Rite (Syro-Romans).
2. Syrians : Jacobites, Mar Thomites and Anglican communion (CMS).
3. Roman Catholics of the Latin Rite (' Latin ').
4. Protestants.

The Protestants were in South Travancore—the converts chiefly from the Shanars as a result of the work of London Mission Society (L.M.S.) missionaries. The majority of Roman Catholics of the Latin Rite are the descendents of the converts to Christianity when the Portuguese Indian empire was at the zenith in 1590s. They were mainly in the coastal areas of Travancore. But a sizable number of Latin Catholics are Syrian Christians. Among them the Latin liturgy was introduced for the first time along with Syriac liturgy by the Christian missionaries who visited Quilon in the

²³ T. K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I, p. 405. For a detailed discussion of the historical background of Syrian Christians in Travancore see C. P. Mathews and M. M. Thomas, *The Indian Churches of St. Thomas*, Delhi : ISPCK, 1967 ; Brown W. L. *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, Cambridge University Press, 1956 ; F. E. Keay, *A History of the Syrian Church in India*, (3rd edn.), Delhi : ISPCK, 1960 ; P. Cherian, *The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society*, Kottayam, 1935 ; E. M. Philip, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas* (Mal.), Tiruvalla, 1929.

medieval period.²⁴ These two sections (Shanar convert 'Protestants' and 'coastal' convert Latin Catholics) do not figure much in the early power struggle of Travancore society. When the Portuguese power forcefully brought a large number to the allegiance of Pope, a sizable section withstood it and kept their connection with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. With the establishment of British power, Church Missionary Society of London began work in the Syrian Church. With the influence of the CMS Mission, a small section came away from the Jacobite Church to form the Anglican Church (1836) with their main centres at Kottayam and Malapally. Some other Syrians who were influenced by the CMS work wanted reform in the ancient Syrian Church. The reformers led by Abraham Malpan of Maramon formed a new Church which is known as Marthoma Church (1837). Numerically the Roman Catholics are stronger. They are followed by Jacobite Syrians and Marthoma Syrians.

The Christians occupied a social position on par with the Nairs in Travancore. They were landed gentry and filled the gap existing in the social structure in the absence of a Vysya caste, by taking trade and commerce.²⁵ They were hard working agriculturists. As K. Achyutha Menon puts it,

A good portion of the trade of the country was in their hands and they took a great part in the development of the country, noticeably in the direction of reclaiming wastes and conversion of forest areas into arable lands.²⁶

They lived among their Hindu brethren in perfect amity and harmony. There were no religious quarrels.

Col. John Munro, the British Resident, developed a deep interest in the non-Roman Syrian Church and was eager to do

²⁴ John Yochanthuruthu, ('Keralathile Latheen Catholicar' (Mal.), *Mathrubhoomi Weekly*, 20-26 January 1980, pp. 6-11.

²⁵ Cf. D.R. Gadgil, *Origin of the Modern Indian Business Class*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1959, p. 19.

According to Gadgil, Moplas (Muslims of Malabar) were important in trading specially in internal trade. The local Syrian Christians encouraged by the Portuguese engaged in trading activities also. Moreover, there was a localised, but highly important community of the Cochin Jews.

²⁶ A. Achyutha Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

everything to help that community. He relieved them from several oppressive burdens to which they had been subjected by some Hindu officials. More than 200 Syrians were taken into government service ; some of whom were placed in high ranks like judges.²⁷ P. Cherian had remarked, 'Though Munro showed special favour to the Puthenkur Syrians (i.e. the non-Roman Syrians), he seems to have done nothing of the kind for the Roman Syrians'.²⁸ It may not be out of place to note here that in helping the Christians he had his own underlying motive as an officer of the British Raj. He looked forward to securing for the British Raj 'the support of a respectable body of Christian subjects, connected with the mass of the people, by a community of language occupations and pursuits and united to the British Government by the stronger ties of religion and mutual safety'.²⁹ But when Munro left, Syrian Christian share in government services diminished. By 1890 they found an equally discontent partner in the Nairs.

Ezhavas

In the purity-pollution ridden Travancore society Ezhavas were a polluting caste, although they constituted the upper layer among the lower castes. The 1891 Census puts the figure of Ezhavas as 4141,217 (16.20 per cent) and 22.05 per cent of Hindu population. In British Malabar, Ezhavas were known as Tiyans or Tiyas or Tiyyas. In Southern Travancore (South of Trivandrum) Shanars occupied a position similar to that of Ezhavas. Their traditional occupations were agriculture, toddy tapping, coir making and manual labour. Although there were some rich families, the community generally was depressed. In the south and in some parts of central Travancore they were known as Ezhavas, Chovan or Chekovan. According to Padmanabha Menon this term has its origin in Sanskrit *sevakan* meaning one who works or serves.³⁰

²⁷ C. P. Mathew and M. M. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

²⁸ P. Cherian, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²⁹ From a minutes to the Madras Government by Col. Munro, reproduced in the CMS 'Proceedings', Vol. VIII, appendix quoted in W. S. Hunt, *The Anglican Church in Travancore and Cochin, 1816-1916*, Kottayam: CMS Press, 1918, p. 57.

³⁰ K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. III, Ernakulam : Cochin Government Press, 1933, p. 424.

The important title of the Ezhavas is Channan. Thurston says,

This title was conferred upon the distinguished members of the caste as a family honour by some of the ancient sovereigns of the country. Panikkan comes next in rank and is derived from *Pani*, work. Thanthan, from *danda* meaning punishment or control is a popular title in some parts. Asan from Acharya, a teacher, is extremely common. The recipients of this honour were instructors in gymnastics and military exercises to Nayar and Ezhava soldiers in bygone times.³¹

Their marriage had the same rituals like Nairs, viz. *Talikettu Kallyanam* and *Sambamdhham*. Their system of inheritance had (1) *Makkathayam* (patrilineal), (2) *Marumakkathayam* (matri-lineal) both north of Quilon and (3) a mixture of the two, between Quilon and Neyyatinkara.

G. P. Pillai who was one of the architects of the epoch making political agitation against the 'foreign Brahmins' in 1891 'known as Malayali Memorial' has written several articles on the condition of Ezhavas towards the end of the 19th century.³² The government jobs were virtually closed for them. They were not freely admitted to the village and district schools. Besides agriculture, Ezhavas were specialists in Ayurvedic medicine, Sanskrit and weaving. Some of them were engaged in trade.³³ However, their social status was not commensurate with their economic standing. For instance, their women were not permitted to cover their breasts. This resulted in an unprecedented rebellion of that community.³⁴ It is said that they paid more taxes to the exchequer

³¹ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V, Madras Government Press, 1909, pp. 395-6.

³² See 'The Tiyas and their Disabilities' (Speech at the 9th Indian National Social Conference held at Poona in 1895); 'The Treatment of Tiyas or Ezhavas in Travancore' (Editorial, *The Madras Standard*, November 1896); 'The Tiyas or Ezhavas Reference in Parliament' (G.P.'s attempt to highlight the issue in British Parliament), *The Madras Standard*, 11 August 1897. All these are included in G. P. Shekar, ed., *Select Writings and Speeches of G. P. Pillai*, 1964, pp. 111-18.

³³ Dr. Palpu, 'Treatment of Tiyas in Travancore' in P. S. Velayudhan, ed. *S.N.D.P. Yogacharitam*, Quilon SNDP Yogam, 1978, pp. 22-86.

³⁴ See R. N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1975.

than any other communities. 12 out of every 100 Ezhava were educated in 1891.³⁵

It was evident that the discriminations the Ezhavas were subjected to were on the ground of caste norms legitimized by religious values. That is, when caste-based oppression was highlighted, it had 'religious discrimination' inherent in it. Therefore, it was natural that a section in the depressed community decided to use religion as an instrument to counter oppression based on religion. In those days if they changed their religion to Christianity, their social disabilities could be minimised; they were taught in every school and were freely employed by the State thereby facilitating upward mobility. Many Ezhavas in Travancore joined the Christian Church as a result of the work of CMS missionaries. There were extensive conversions to Christianity among the Shanars in Southern Travancore. As Jeffrey puts it, 'Since 1806, conversions to Christianity had enabled more than 7000 Shanars to escape from some of the worst disabilities imposed on them by their traditional status and occupation.'³⁶ By 1850s the LMS had 15,000 followers. The interesting point is that a section of socially alienated community sought to overcome their deprivation by becoming members of a new religion. This upward mobility was felt by those who embraced the new religion themselves. In a petition presented to the Maharajah in 1873, they said

The native Protestant Christian community realise very strongly the disabilities to which they are still subjected, notwithstanding the remarkable manner and extent to which they have, as a body, risen in the social scale despite of many obstacles.³⁷

That is, in religion, they saw new avenues for material gains and consequently, status improvement.

It may also be noted that those enlightened among the upper castes tried to stop this exodus and tried to bring justice by invoking religion. G. P. Pillai, for instance, was surprised that in spite of

³⁵ P. S. Valayudhan, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-56.

³⁶ Robin Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁷ Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1833, p. 348.

the attractions in changing the religion, the majority of Ezhavas remained Hindus. Then he reprimands the Travancore Government with the same coin. To quote,

an ancient Hindu government like that of Travancore ought to be extremely kind to these people—ought to see that they all remain Hindus. On the other hand, I am surprised to observe that the Travancore government would rather see the low caste subjects become converts to Christianity than give them a helping hand and raise them to the level of other Hindus.³⁸

The point to be emphasised here is that adoption of a new religion or faith meant for the people's liberation from social disabilities. A new religion was a leveller of distinctions and inequalities and naturally it meant an instrument to make progress among the deprived sections. An elevation in status became a distinct possibility through one's change of religion.

Social Organisation

The common words to denote the village are *desam* in the north, and *kara* in the south. *Gramam* and *Sanketam* and *Tali* always stood for Brahmin settlements and temple territory. *Desam* or *kara* denoted the jurisdictional concept of a Nair village which was not their exclusive settlement because it contained people belonging to other communities. Each caste had its own caste organisation with separate caste assemblies.³⁹ The Nair assembly in the village is known as *karayogam* (village meeting) in the south, and *tarakuttam* (village court) in the north. The same village for its Ezhavas was a *cheri* though co-extensive with the Nair *kara* or *desam*. The leader of the lower caste in the village was a *tandan*, and Ezhava. *Desakuttams* normally settled the disputes and tried offenses against caste morality or failure to pay dues in kind to the village temple. Social ostracism meant that the offenders might not enter temples or bathe in public bathing pools or enter their

³⁸ G. P. Shekar, ed. *op. cit.*, p. 114.

³⁹ Puthazhathu Raman Menon, '*Pandathe Nair Karayogangal*' (Mal.), *Nair Service Society Suvarna Grandham*, Changanacherry NSS, 1964, pp. 397-400. Keezhedathu Vasudevan Nair, '*Kodungalloor Onnu Kure, Ayiram-Yogam*' (Mal.), *Ibid.*, pp. 243-6; P. R. G. Mathur, 'Caste Councils of Iyavas of Kerala', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. IV, 1977, p. 261 ff.

Nair houses.⁴⁰ The Christian social organisation was centred around parishes. The church (building) was at the centre of the village. The priest was known as *Kathanaar* or *Achen*⁴¹ who had a great say in disputes in the villages. He was the most important person in all social occasions in the community or in the family like birth, marriage, or death. Lay leaders were also important in handling financial matters. Bishops (*Metrans*) were above all the priests and several parishes constituted a diocese with one *Metran* at the top.⁴² All parishes had, besides collective Sunday worship, regular meetings either in families or in the churches, record of its members, registers for marriage, birth and death; subscription lists, and regular observances of festivals. Socially this organisational network was an effective infrastructure to face the dawn of capitalist growth without much stress or strain. However, the Church hierarchy represented more feudal than capitalist values.

Catalysts for Societal Power

By the latter part of the 18th century, capitalist inroads were made into a feudal social structure. Travancore was fast developing an infrastructure suitable for rapid expansion of a mercantile economy. The political stability of Travancore since the days of Marthanda Varma; extensive canals and roads, relaxation of monopoly, trade and the sharp rise in cash crop prices, paved the way for a phenomenal expansion of trade and commerce during the latter part of the 19th century.

Land, being the important possession which determined the status in a feudal society, ownership of land and tax being paid for the land was an important index to assess the relative strength of the communities.

As per a report in 1904 the number of persons who paid land tax above Rs. 100 community-wise were : 154 Nairs, 98 Christians,

⁴⁰ J. Puthenkalam, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

⁴¹ Researchers show that *Achen* is sociologically linked with *Aschen* the term of honour with which Brahmins (Namboodiris) were called in Kerala. That is, it has a common 'priestly' meaning for both Hindus and Christians.

⁴² Cf. Mon. Mathew Vellankal, 'Edavaka-Christava darasanathil', *AKCC Bulletin Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Kottayam, 1973, pp. 151-5.

34 Malayali Brahmins, 18 Tamil Brahmins, 14 Muslims, 10 Kshatriyas, 8 Ezhavas, 5 Europeans, 3 Ambalavasis, and 17 others.

Kerala's economy was agricultural and the agricultural production was very primitive. Mateer observes that 'Manufacture being few and insignificant, agriculture is the principal industry in Travancore, one-third of the able bodied population being engaged in it.'⁴³

Although the State had a name in international trade, very few Malayalees went to foreign countries on business. But the foreigners used to come to Travancore to buy the rich agricultural produce. The flourishing foreign trade was concentrated at a number of ports. K. M. Panikkar gives a good account of the trade at the Kerala ports towards the end of the 18th century in his study of Malabar and the Dutch.⁴⁴

The Government utilised the revenue mainly not for productive purpose but for temple maintenance and feeding the Brahmins. Expenses of *Oottupurakal* was an important item in the budget. The Travancore Revenue Manual (1808) accounts an expenditure of Rs. 1,98,500 for *Oottupura* out of a total income of Rs. 30,00,000.

By 1860 there were a number of English and Malayalam schools all over Travancore. The first English schools in Travancore (6 of them) were opened by Rev. Tobias Ringeltaube, the LMS missionary in Nagercoil. In 1816, the CMS opened a College in Kottayam, the first of its kind. The schools run by the missionaries welcomed depressed classes but later when the Government started schools it was for the sake of the upper castes.⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that there was no Ezhava student in Travancore in 1863-4 whereas there were 517 Tamil Sudras, 424 Malayali Sudras (Nairs), 315 Christians (all divisions), 266 Tamil Brahmins, 37 Muslims, 1 Namboodiri and 19 others.

⁴³ *Native Life in Travancore*, p. 216.

⁴⁴ K. M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Dutch*, Bombay: Tarapurwalla Sons & Co., 1931, pp. 140-60.

⁴⁵ For details of the beginning of the English education in S. Travancore, and how depressed classes benefited out of it, see C. M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore*, Veprey (Madras) SPS Press, 1903; I. H. Hecker, *A Hundred Years in Travancore 1806-1906*, London: H. R. Allenson Ltd., 1908 (UTC Archives).

As a corollary to the development of education and contact with western missionaries, the 19th century saw the advent of journalism in Kerala, and in Travancore, in particular. This paved the way for dissemination of knowledge and better communication. It was the Christians who pioneered this technological advancement and subsequently this led to each community coming to know of the real situation in which they were *vis-a-vis* others. These publications—though not near to the present standards of journalism—could cement the communal ties of each section of the society. *Gnanikshepam* (1848) published from Kottayam by the CMS was the first Malayalam journal to be published from Travancore.⁴⁶ The first newspaper in Malayalam came out from Cochin in 1864 as a translation of Western Star with the title *Paschima Tharaka*. The first Malayalam editor was Oommen Philipose, a Syrian Christian. In 1867, *Sannigdavaadi*, the Malayalam version of *Malabar Herald*, was published from Kottayam but was short lived because of its criticism of the Dewan Madhavaraayar. The first paper in Kerala to uphold a community's interest was *Malayali* by enlightened Nairs in Travancore (from Quilon) with the sole interest of Nair community's upliftment.⁴⁷ Syrian Christians followed suit. *Nazrani*⁴⁸ *Deepika* was published in 1867 from Mannanam near Kottayam with Nidhirical Mani Kathanaar as editor. *Malayala Manorama* was started by a Syrian Christian company on March 22, 1880. The Ezhavas did not sit quiet. From Quilon in 1891 appeared the *Sujana Nandini*, a weekly edited by an Ezhava, Paravur V. Kesavanasan.⁴⁹

The English education, control over land and access to government power—these were the three variables affecting the status and power of each community at that time. Here we find the

⁴⁶ Murkot Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama, Samskara Tarangani*, Kottayam: Malayala Manorama Publishing House, 1973, p. 107.

⁴⁷ V. Karunakaran Nambiar, '*Patrapravarthanatnil*' (Mal.), *Suvarnagrandham*, p. 278. According to Nambiar this Weekly began in 1894. But Kunhappa says it was started in 1886. Kunhappa, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁴⁸ The native Christians were known as *Nazaranees* meaning the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Foreigners referred to them as St. Thomas Christians because their ancestors were converted by St. Thomas. Mathew K. Jacob and Lila Dube, 'Kerala Christians' (Correspondence), *Man*, Vol. 12, No. II 1977, pp. 340-2.

⁴⁹ G. Rajendran, *The Ezhava Community and Kerala Politics*, Trivandrum: The Kerala Academy of Political Science, 1974, p. 30.

earlier notion of monopoly of land as the sole determinant of status and power drastically giving way to English education and civil services. Brahmins, specially foreign Brahmins, could attract the envy and anger of other communities as they were highly privileged and exploited the new avenues opened up on all these fronts. Although Nairs had a lion's share, they were conscious of the erosion of their once dominant position. Syrian Christians got a taste of the power and privilege accruing to them when they had hold in the Government during Col. Munro's tenure. But towards the end of the 19th century, they too found their access to status symbols narrowing down. Ezhavas were denied totally, the great opportunities the new education and the break-up of feudalism offered by the religious and social sanctions against them. It is significant to note that some members of the community could perceive the advantages of the fresh avenues. Here the crux of the matter is that some people gained and some lost not on the criterion of merit but because they were born into a particular community. That the community's identity was based on certain religious sanctions and thereby cultural factors, is an important point to be taken note of.

With this background, the 19th century saw in Kerala new economic enterprises. Starting schools on modern lines itself was an enterpreneurial activity because ownership of it often brought prestige, economic power and social influence. In this, Christians had an initial advantage because of their association with the European missionaries whose language and system of schooling were the standards of the time. Malayalam and whatever was native (Travancorean) was relegated to a second place. Christian churches and parishes were ideal organisational set ups to start schools at the initiative of the community. So modern schools sprang up in close association with the parishes or churches. According to Nagam Aiya, in 1891 the Christian community who had association with the CMS had 164 schools ; 3,879 school boys, 1,031 school girls. The Latin rite under the Diocese of Verapalay had one college, one high school, 54 parochial schools, the LMS in south Travancore had 67 Zenana teachers, 332 school matters, 39 school mistresses.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Nagam Aiya, *Report on the Census of Travancore*, Madras: Addison & Co., 1894, p. 382 ff.

A local church building in Malayalam is *palli* and its verandah used for teaching children is *kuda*. Thus a 'modern' school is known in Malayalam as *pallikudam* showing its close affinity to a parish church.⁵¹ This is prevalent even today. This proves how a centre of religious activity became an instrument of bringing about a non-religious factor into the centre of social life. Later it became so pervasive that all communities were vying with one another in acquiring ownership of maximum number of educational institutions.

Perhaps the first capitalist development in Kerala was the beginning of plantations on a large scale. In 1830, William Huxham opened a coffee estate on the hill ranges east of Quilon. Subsequently, when coffee became dear in the international market, many coffee estates sprang up in the western ghats. The export of coffee in 1843 amounted to 155 candies (910 cwt) on which a duty of Rs. 669 was levied. It was grown in the plains by Travancoreans at small altitudes, by M/s. Binny & Co.⁵² In 1862, six Europeans began an 15,118 acre coffee estate. According to certain calculations planters alone had spent nearly Rs. 90 lakhs on land in its clearing, planting, upkeep and taxes.⁵³ Several ancilliary economic activities developed. Shops and markets were open to supply the workers, contractors and artificers on the estate with rice, tobacco, cloth, arrack, salt and so on.

In 1900 there were 17 foreign companies mostly in insurance and plantations with their headquarters in Alleppey about 23 joint stock companies registered in Travancore and 47 factories under the Factories Act.⁵⁴ The first joint stock company floated in

⁵¹ Before the advent of 'modern' education there were flourishing centres of learning in Kerala known as *Padasalas* and *Kalaries*.

⁵² *Native Life in Travancore*, p. 225; *Yogacharithram*, pp. 15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

The petition of planters in 1872 said

This expenditure has gone to pay for labour and supplies and every rupee of it is now circulating among the people of the country, enabling them to purchase a large number of taxable articles, enabling them to pay their land assessment more easily and thus increasing their contribution to the revenue... The British capital which has been introduced into this country by British planters has indisputably helped to make the country richer and indirectly to fill the *Sirkar* Treasury. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁴ M. A. Oommen, 'Rise and Growth of Banking in Kerala', *Social Scientist* October 1976, p. 25.

Travancore was for the Punalur Paper Mills in 1889 by M/s. Cameron Chison, a European Company based at Quilon. It was followed by the first Malayali Company, viz. the Manorama Company started by the Kandathil family. The third company also was started by the Kandathil family with an initial investment of Rs. 1,00,000 for trading in plantation crops. Out of the profits of this company the first organised Commercial Bank was established in 1893, called the Travancore Bank by a member of the same family—Eapen Vakil. This was the first organised credit institution in the lines of modern banking. K. C. Mammen Mapillai had written about this as a memorable turning point in the history of banking in Travancore. It may be noted that the organisational and entrepreneurial talents in the Travancore area centred around a few Christian families at rural areas like Niranom, Talawadi, Ambalapuzha, Chengannur and Tiruvalla.⁵⁵ The advantage they had was the parish organisation which had encouraged chit funds⁵⁶ and *kuris* even before capitalist form of business organisation and production began.⁵⁷

The Government began a number of public works projects to build roads, buildings, canals. The plantations, factories in Alleppey and Quilon, the public works and trade with British—all these brought in money economy. The first factory in Travancore was the Coir Factory started at Alleppey in 1859 by a European, Mr. Dara. English and American firms opened factories at Quilon, Colachel, Cochin, etc. In 1880-81 export of coir yarn amounted to 137,000 cwts, valued at 12½ lakhs rupees.⁵⁸ Before 1857, the wages were given in the form of things or gifts during special occasions. By 1960, wages were given in cash and the wages were relatively high by local standards. According to the

⁵⁵ K. C. Chacko, *History of the Federal Bank Ltd.*, Alwaye Federal Bank Ltd., 1979, pp. 40-43.

⁵⁶ The Chit Fund is an institution whereby its members contribute an agreed sum every month and the total sum is taken by the person whose name is drawn in a lottery, or it may be claimed by a member who is in need of money by bidding. There were money *chitties* and paddy *chitties*—the latter flourishing in plain areas, specially at the time of harvest. See Nagam Aiya, *op. cit.* p. 559.

⁵⁷ The Kandathil family had a tradition of running *chitties* as far back as the latter half of the 18th century. Trichur in the Cochin State was a thriving centre for *chitties* and *kuries* run by Parish Churches.

⁵⁸ Samuel Mateer, *op. cit.*, 1883, p. 244.

1875 census report, the daily wage of a labourer was food and four annas (25 P.) The *Madras Mail* of June 30, 1897 reported that between 1864-65, under the Public Works Department, there were 10,000 labourers drawn from Ezhava and other Backward Communities. When coconut products began to fetch remunerative prices, the export increased. In 1871, coir products were worth Rs. 9.27 lakhs and in 1881 it rose to Rs. 26.22 lakhs. Copra export fetched Rs. 21.06 lakhs in 1871 and Rs. 42.37 lakhs in 1891.⁵⁹ The owners of these coconut gardens were Namboodiris, Nairs and Syrian Christians but the workers and traders were Ezhavas. A number of other occupations like distillation (*arrack*), making of jaggery, fishing, etc. came about at the close of 19th century. In Abkari, Ezhavas and Syrian Christians dominated. This was an ongoing process, dynamic enough to change occupational position. M.A. Oommen believes that the demonstration effect of the success of one family or community might have prompted several others to follow 'the gold rush of the trade boom'.⁶⁰

The administration was favourable to the expansion of capitalism. Mateer says, 'If capitalists should embark on the business of fish curing, the Government will be willing to aid them by the duty free issue of salt'.⁶¹ Feudal relations gradually came to be questioned. The large and steady increase of money invested in the new enterprises could not but produce ripples in the feudal society. As Mateer puts it, the new ventures had 'A powerful effect on the industrial and commercial status of the country in the increase of remunerative employment and dissemination of wealth'.⁶²

Thus, on the one side new possibilities were opening but on the other they were inaccessible to many because of certain social factors beyond their control—one most frustrating experience being the denial, because the underprivileged were born in a particular community. While Nairs and Christians exploited the new opportunities, those among Ezhavas who could perceive the new developments with an overall view were frustrated with the magni-

⁵⁹ Travancore Administrative Reports 1870-71 to 1891-92 quoted in P.S. Velayudhan, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ M. A. Oommen, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁶¹ Samuel Mateer, *op. cit.*, 1883, p. 253.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

tude of their deprivation. This feeling was sharpened when the power of the State was also expanded.

The latter part of the 19th century saw an ever increasing function of State. The judiciary, revenue, police, public works and so on began to penetrate into hitherto unaffected areas of social life. The presence of Government was being felt. Naturally this brought about a 'glamour' for the job in the Government. Even a lower post like that of *pravarthikaran* (village revenue officer) was coveted. It conferred dignity not only on the person and family but to the entire 'community' to which he belonged. It meant power too. Moreover, it assured a steady income and economic security. Therefore, little wonder that each community began to measure their respective social status in terms of the posts their members held in the Government. It was a shared honour for members of the community. So with the same token, to be kept away from the centres of power meant disgrace and weakness. Under these circumstances, it was natural that each community tried to compute the number of posts their members held in the Government. It was this question of *Sirkar* jobs which sparked off unprecedented political agitations in the State in the following decades.

Even if there is deprivation, one must be able to perceive that deprivation. When the representation of each community in the Government was glaringly inadequate considering the number of qualified persons available, it is natural that this becomes the focal point of struggle. Their perception came from the educated young men of these deprived communities. The leadership came from these educated middle class and upper middle class youth. What remained was to mobilise the deprived into collective action. Mobilisation of the people was made easy once it had a bearing on their communal identity, based on religious faith and sentiments. That was the significance of primordial loyalty in whipping up feelings. They were told that the present state of affairs had something to do with their life issues which were related to the structures and institutions built up through centuries in society. Common people could be made to believe by the articulate sections of the community that what happens at the centre of power (Trivandrum) is something that will affect them tomorrow, if not today.

Though it was religion which gave sanction for the primordial groups to be segments, divided one from the other with social and ritual distance and boundaries, religion as an external value system gave birth to a new social outlook. With the arrival of European Christianity through the Western missions a new ethics was being sown. It can be argued that this is a coincidence *i.e.* changes could have occurred independent of missionaries, but they had accelerated the process. Further, Christians were there before missionaries arrived along with the colonial powers. But our stress is on the new ethics and world view which came with the encounter of two cultures. The missionaries came from a puritanical, pietistic background after the reformation in Europe. Their teachings and preachings created a climate for cultural and social awakening. 'The missionaries' passion for liberal social and cultural reform' says M. M. Thomas 'had roots not merely in their evangelical Christianity. It had roots also in the culture of the Enlightenment and of Capitalism which Europe then represented'⁶³. The work of the missionaries resulted in the differentiation in the traditional Kerala Society—coming into being of new divisions among the Christians and its impact on communities outside Christian *viz.* Nair, Ezhava and so on. Values of liberal democratic humanism and a culture of individualism necessary for creativity of persons as against cultural rigidities had tremendous impact in heralding a new pattern of social outlook. The reformatory faith dawned in the orthodox Syrian community as M. M. Thomas puts it, 'could not but shift focus of authority from communal tradition to enlightened individual conscience in all matters...the idea of man as responsible selfhood and the idea of community as a fellowship of persons voluntarily committed to moral values'.⁶⁴ This had the revolutionary potential of breaking open the social, political and economic exclusiveness of different communities after many years. Its immediate impact was an added incentive to the already existing mercantile and commercial spirit of Syrian Christians.

This did set the background for potentially powerful movements. Needless to say, that was the beginning of a new chapter

⁶³ M. M. Thomas, *Towards an Evangelical Social Gospel*, Madras : Christian Literature Society, 1977, p. 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

in Travancore's social history where people realised that their rights could be protected ; their legitimate rights could be achieved only through collective action. Here, an important change in the consciousness of the leadership may be noted. Till then, whatever rights and privileges people enjoyed were the gifts from a patron, viz. the Maharajah. Never was it understood as the legitimate rights, if denied, to be fought for. This new understanding of the elite of each community was revolutionary and what remained was just to disseminate this knowledge to the rank and file of the community. Primodial ties and groups were the effective ties in this social process.

Thus, the closing decades of the 19th century, the social conditions were right in Travancore for an awakening of the people to demand their rights from the State. For a minority, Tamil Brahmins, upper class Nairs, it was the protection of the rights and privileges they had been enjoying for a long time. But for a large section, it was a demand to get little more so that they could move up on the social ladder. The social aspect of this demand was that, people were mobilised on the basis of their primordial religious loyalties. This movement of people hardly transcended the segmentary approach in the system in the latter days in Kerala. Nevertheless, the period 1891-1932 sees an interesting beginning and an absorbing end. The interesting beginning was that overtly the first significant articulation of the demands of the people (Malayalee Memorial) was not on the basis of any segments but holistic, the entire people of the State demanding their rights. Then, their slogan was 'Travancore for Travancoreans'. However, it gave way to segmentary approach, each part agitating for their particularistic demands, the birth of Nair, Ezhava, Christian, Muslim, Pulaya, Paraya associations with political content. The abstention movement (1933) was its watershed. By the closing of the third decade, with the formation of political parties there were signs to show that element transcending these 'part' approach were appearing on the horizon.

THE EAST-WEST CONFLICT AND THE THIRD WORLD

NINAN KOSHY

When the English poet Rudyard Kipling wrote 'East is East and West is West and the twain shall never meet', he was not referring to the East of the present East-West conflict but to the East which is also known as the Orient. By East and West today the general reference is to the bi-polar division of the world after the Second World War. But that division is no longer fully valid and there are several new elements which challenge the bi-polarity and indicate that we are living in a multi-polar world. This however does not deny the significance and the dominant role of East-West conflict in present international relations.

It should be qualified that the Third World is not in any way uniform, that there is much diversity in it, there are different words in it and therefore differentiation is needed when we speak about the Third World. This is not to deny that there are common problems, common features and common aspirations in the Third World. The Third World is located on the periphery of the First World, with its 'over-development' and the 'ethics of consumerism' on the one hand, and the Second World with its centrally planned economy and a revolutionary ideology on the other.

It should also be noted that this division of the world into three is not universally accepted. The Chinese have a different way of dividing the world in which the First World consists of the two super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union and the Second World consists of the 'developed' countries including Japan and the Third World consists of China and the rest of the world. There are many in the 'Third World' who take exception to the term.

The components of the East-West conflict include ideological factors, struggle for military supremacy, competition for spheres of influence, strategic considerations and perceptions of national interests. They have varied in intensity and relative strength during

the period after the Second World War over the different phases of 'cold war', 'détente' and the 'new cold war'. They have also been affected by the increasingly intractable character of periphery challenges to the super-power empires built after the Second World War. They are represented by two military alliances, the NATO and the Warsaw Pact confronting each other. They are dominated by the USA on one side, and the Soviet Union on the other. There are increasing tensions within the alliances at a time the necessary minimum of mutual trust between the two super-powers has ebbed away. However, they have been able to maintain relative peace in the European theatre during the period after the Second World War.

But the same period has witnessed a large number of wars in the third World. The Third World has been the scene of most of the world's violence since 1945. The cost of upheaval and destruction has been tremendous. One may say that the real centre of gravity in the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union has moved to targets of opportunity in the Third World. There have been more than 130 wars after the Second World War claiming more lives than the Second World War did. Most of them have been in the Third World and have been fought with direct or indirect involvement, including weapon deliveries by the East and the West.

Apart from all the indigenous causes of conflict in the Third World, external intervention has been responsible for considerable amount of violence, threatening even the precarious independence of several countries. The systematic intrusion of international political and economic pressures on the domestic, political and economic organization of societies has become a way of life for many poor nations. External interventions are often subtle and indirect but direct interventions also have taken place. Modern intervention has manifested itself through foreign aid, revolutions, proxy wars, ideological contests and neocolonialism. According to a recent study of the Brookings Institution, the United States and the Soviet Union intervened 200 and 190 times respectively in the Third World, after the Second World War. The intervention by the USA has often been in the name of 'free world', 'containing communism and democracy'. The Soviet Union has often

intervened to support 'people's liberation wars'. There have been gains and losses for the USA and the Soviet Union in this continuing contest. Obviously any political gains made by either side are immediately converted into forward strategic positions in the great power struggle. However, it has to be pointed out that in general the Soviet Union has succeeded in being most often on the side of the struggles of the people in the Third World for liberation and justice whereas the USA has most often succeeded in being on the side of reactionary and repressive forces. The continuing support that the USA has given to Israel and South Africa and to repressive regimes in Central and South America makes it appear to be on the wrong side of the struggles in many parts of the world. With regard to the Soviet Union, the heaviest military and political costs are demanded by its intervention in Afghanistan.

There are some conflicts in the Third World which are specifically the results of contradictions of colonialism. Africa was carved up during the colonial times according to criteria that had nothing to do with national identity and national culture and the colonial powers left behind them conflicts of regional, cultural, border and social character. These conflicts have been then further complicated by the super-imposition of East-West tensions. Conversely regional conflicts, can themselves lead—have sometimes led—to wider escalation of tension, involving the danger of great power confrontation.

Everybody agrees that the present situation in the developing world is one of turmoil and tension. As to the causes and the nature of the tensions and conflicts a number of factors will need be taken into account. There are unfinished struggles for independence and self-determination e.g. in Namibia, in New Caledonia, in Palestine and in Western Sahara. The anti-colonialist struggle has operated sometimes independently from and sometimes in close connection with the East-West conflict. There are social and political upheavals because of structural crisis. There are struggles for human rights and dignity. There is often an attempt to distort such struggles viewing them through the coloured glasses of East-West conflict and to ignore the perceptions of the people engaged in the struggles. There is a process of anti-neocolonialist

revolution and an aspiration in most of the developing nations to gain economic as well as political independence. This is the second stage of process of national and socio-economic liberation from external dependence. There is the problem of adjustment of the new nations to the world realities and to the pains of growth. The instability in the Third World should not be seen as a negative phenomenon. It is in most instances part of a creative process, even conceding that such process is being vitiated by internal and external forces.

It is not that the West is unaware of the socio-political upheavals and the inevitable tensions associated with basic socio-political changes. But the Western nations, especially the United States, have been identified as the *status quo* powers which are opposed to change and have given the impression that they equate stability with *status quo*. On the other hand, the Soviet Union often appears on the 'other side of the barricade'. The striving to ensure their accelerated social and industrial development prompts several Third World countries to choose a socialist orientation, or at least assume a more radical stand in their confrontation with the United States. But it has to be pointed out that even countries which have opted for a socialist path have not always done so as a result of a conscious ideological choice.

The arms race between the East and the West has direct impact on the Third World. This has been a main contributing factor in the militarization of large parts of the Third World. The perceptions about the role of the military in newly independent countries were responsible for large scale military support by the USA to several countries in the fifties and sixties. The military was considered to be the modernizing and stabilizing force and this perception did play a part in the development of military regimes in different parts of the world. The intervention in Third World conflicts by major powers reflecting the East-West conflict results in the attempts to influence the outcome of a struggle by providing countries with arms, training, advisory support, etc. As soon as any such support is provided to one country, all other parties to the dispute will almost automatically seek similar assistance from a competing great power.

Coupled with this is the dynamics of arms trade and transfer. At present there is little prospect for any kind of restraint on

international arms trade. Conventional arms transfer talks between the USA and the Soviet Union were adjourned three years ago and have not been resumed. European arms suppliers have shown no inclination towards restraint. International tension and economic pressure all make bleak prospects for any restraint. There has been a steep increase in the flow of armaments to developing countries. This has been particularly fuelled by economic and political competition among arms producing countries. There are also powerful domestic factors behind the trend of importing arms stemming primarily from the fear that their fragile sense of nationhood could be torn apart by internal tension and instability. But the fact remains that the modern conventional weapons have all been tested in the Third World theatres and the human cost paid by the Third World is very high.

However, it may be stated that the dominant feature of the East-West conflict is the nuclear arms race. This has developed a momentum of its own, largely impervious to social and political control. Informed Third World opinion tends to be equally critical of the East and the West in their race for nuclear arms superiority. The Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament organized by the World Council of Churches (November 1981), in its report 'Before It's Too Late' stated 'It was pointed out that, particularly in the area of nuclear proliferation, the industrialized world and the nuclear powers have tried far too much to impose their own strategic and political views on Third World nations. There is deep distrust among the latter of the postures of the nuclear weapon states on deterrence and non-proliferation. The paternalistic and hypocritical manner in which nuclear states deal with these issues has led to cynicism in the Third World'. The Report added 'It is often argued that the nuclear arms race between the major power results in a neglect of the economic needs of the Third World countries. While there is some truth in this argument it can be made with even greater force regarding the conventional arms race. More important, however, is the reinforcement of dominant-dependent relations in the present military alliances through the possession by a few countries of nuclear weapons. These leave very little flexibility in international relations, or for any changes in them which would threaten the current security perceptions of the major powers. This stalemate

poses serious disadvantage to non-nuclear nations. Their struggle for social and political change are thus often distorted by the security considerations and economic interests of the major powers which tend to be based on maintaining the political *status quo* supported by nuclear deterrence'.

Therefore, there is distrust in the Third World about both the West and the East which appear to share a common nuclear weapons culture. They seem to be in the same bed though their dreams may be different. However, between the United States and the Soviet Union, the latter has shown greater interest in the relaxation of tension and arms control. This may stem from the greater dilemmas the Soviet Union confronts—politically, economically and militarily—internally as well as externally. The United States being the stronger party and more advanced technologically is actually the pace-setter in the arms race. The Soviet Union, however, is not willing to drop out of the race, fearing the supremacy of the United States.

It is true that the very destructive capability of nuclear weapons makes calculations about strategic balance/superiority largely irrelevant. Moreover while the accumulation of nuclear weapons and nuclear arsenals has become a main criterion of the balance of power game, it may be argued that they have proved to be of little direct relevance in relation to the Third World.

However, it should be pointed out that arms control discussions between the USA and the USSR have often been linked to strategic balance as it affects the Third World. For example, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty agreements formally codified the *status quo* in the Soviet-American strategic balance. The United States agreed to such a codification of the strategic parity in treaty form as a gesture of good will—retaining, however, a reserve for surpassing the USSR. And Washington, reasoned, the Soviet Union was bound to 'reciprocate' by the obligation to support the socio-political *status quo* in the Third World. As Henry Kissinger put it more subtly 'In our minds efforts to reduce the danger of nuclear war by the control of arms had to be linked to an end by the constant Soviet pressure against the global balance of power'.

The linkage was clear with regard to SALT II agreement. The USA refused to ratify it—first mainly on the grounds of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan ; then with the accession of the Reagan administration, the reasons given were expanded to encompass both military considerations and a broad list of political charges. The Soviet Union always rejected 'linkage' and that was because the Soviet Union believed that in as much as the *status quo* in the Third World was mostly pro-American, as a consequence of US economic domination, such an understanding wholly suited the United States. This however does not mean that the Soviet Union will always be necessarily opposed to certain agreements between great powers on the stabilization of the *status quo* in the zone of developing countries. The 'linkage' is rejected by the Third World because fundamentally change in the Third World stems from the struggle of the peoples for social, political and economic justice. It should not also be forgotten that there have been policy-makers in the USA like Mr. Brezinski who at one time argued that the Soviet Union should be entirely removed from the solution of problems concerning the developing countries. According to them these problems should be solved through the collective power of a united Western world ('trilateralism'), laying down tough conditions for the developing countries. This used to be known as the white man's burden.

Can any 'code of conduct' of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Third World lessen their contribution on an international scale? If this means establishing spheres of influence or spheres of special interests, then a 'code' is unacceptable to the Third World.

On the other hand, if such a 'code' means basing relations with the developing countries on generally recognized norms of international law, then that may be acceptable to the Third World. These norms necessarily include the recognition of the right of every people to govern their own affairs, the obligation to respect the sovereignty of each State over its natural resources, and the readiness to honour the status of non-alignment which many of these countries have chosen.

Of course, the non-aligned movement is not in a good shape today. The immediate problem has been caused by Iraq which

was to be the host for the Summit this year. But there are several other factors which contribute to something close to crisis in the movement. It can be very well argued that at least in the case of some members the claim to non-alignment is rather weak because of what is almost an alignment with one or other of the blocs, and in the most prominent cases close to the one led by the Soviet Union. It is worth recalling that the non-aligned movement in its early stage had to be against the West, in a way following up the anti-colonial struggles. But it was a movement misunderstood and misrepresented by both power blocs at that time. Nehru was attempting to achieve neutrality at a time when Dulles was branding neutrality as immoral and Stalin was saying that all neutrals were American agents.

In the Third World there is greater recognition of the need for horizontal interpenetration. Overwhelmingly the cultural, economic and political and military traffic from the Third World has been in the direction of Europe, USA or Soviet Union. There is need for more regular traffic among themselves.

There is a general trend in contemporary metropolitan thought to make light of the role of Third World actors in relation to global politics. One version of this argument is that only the strong and rich States can be expected to exercise responsibility for the survival of the species as a whole. Poor States are either sensibly pre-occupied by their own problems of poverty and illiteracy or distracted from these concerns by trouble making or irresponsible leaders of the type of Gaddafi. The second version argues that Third World States are so much tied to the powerful States in the North that they cannot take any independent initiatives. All these arguments have considerable influence not only in the First and Second Worlds but also in the Third World.

It is therefore necessary to recall that Third World States have played significant roles in global peace politics in the period after the Second World War. One example is the role of India and Indonesia in the diplomacy of the Bandung conference of Asian and African nations in 1955, an attempt to bring China out into a comity of Asian States and also to undergird peace-making in relation to Indochina. The 1961 Belgrade Conference of Non-

Aligned Nations played a part in trying to lessen the tensions between Washington and Moscow at that time.

In spite of several problems that the Organization of African Unity faces now, its successful mediation, in a number of conflicts also checking superpower rivalry's penetration into the continent should not be forgotten. And the 1968 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America is also an important achievement.

Some of the most imaginative proposals for shaping new international institutions have come from the Third World. Special mention may be made of the proposals for a New International Economic Order. It is true that the North-South dialogue is in stalemate. At the Arusha meeting in 1979, the Group of Seventy-Seven called for an increasingly more active role to be played by the East European countries in bringing about the establishment of a New International Economic Order. It is specially pointed out that the USSR has great power economic interests. Of course, the Soviet Union does not want to be one of the representatives of the 'Northern club' in the North-South dialogue. The Eastern bloc does not want to be lumped together with the West or so to be contrasted with in a division which it sees as the consequence of colonial history. But any discussion on a New International Economic Order has to take into account the economic alliances in the East as well as in the West. In any Third World discussion of the East-West conflict these economic alliances also form an important component especially because of their relationships with the respective military alliances.

For the East and the West, the Third World will be with them like the poor and as the poor. It will continue to be one of the major irritants in East-West relations because the struggles for greater justice and dignity are taking place in the context of an intense confrontation of two world systems.

THE RURAL POOR, DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

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Since late 1960s, when the countryside in several parts of India became disquiet, a serious concern at policy level about the problems of the rural poor has been discernible.¹ This has led to formulation of programmes intended to benefit the small and marginal farmers and the agricultural labour. Even in area development programmes such as Drought Prone Area and Command Area Development programmes, due recognition was given to the needs of the economically deprived and socially depressed sections of the rural population. This perspective is manifest with greater vigour and intensity in the currently operative Integrated Rural Development Programme based on a synthesis of 'strategies tested and found effective from our experience of implementing special programmes like Small Farmers and Marginal Farmers Development Agencies, CAD Agencies and DPAP'. The intention of the policy makers has obviously been to ensure that the green uprising occurs within the existing political system of the country.²

The aim of this paper is to analyse the evolving linkages between the agrarian structure and the development process, and to seek to locate the factors which intervene between the accumulated rural tension and the political system. At the outset we can have a close look at the country's agrarian structure. It is this structure and its main components, and the complexity of interrelationships within it, which provide an appropriate setting for developing a proper political perspective on rural development process.

The agrarian structure is essentially 'a hierarchical system consisting of several groups linked by a network of economic

¹ Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Research and Policy Division, New Delhi, *The Causes and Nature of Current Agrarian Tensions* (Summary, Mimeo), 1969.

² For a lucid discussion of the nature and forms of green uprising, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, London, Yale University Press, 1968, pp. 74-8.

and social relationships.³ These relationships emanate partly from long traditions and partly from more recent social, political and economic developments in India. There has been an inter-penetration of the traditional and the modern moulds of inter-group relationships, and the overall impact has been intensification of the cleavages in the rural society. However, no organised uprising of the rural poor such as the small farmers and the agricultural labour, has occurred on an extensive scale mainly because of the extremely low level of their political mobilisation. At the same time, a significant part of the benefits, intended for the rural poor, has actually been denied to them, and several planned efforts to aid them have been frustrated by the operation of the rural power structure.

When the agrarian structure is disaggregated one can see several categories. At the apex are the big farmers. They control a small number of consolidated holdings, but own a vast operated area. According to NSS figures for 1970-71, only 3.08 per cent of holdings fall in the size group 10.13 hectares and above, but the operated area for this size group comprises 22.83 per cent of the total area.⁴ In the wake of land reforms several marked tendencies have been generated in the group of the big farmers. The more enterprising among them have taken to cultivation seriously, and have adopted new technology on an extensive scale. They do not generally lease out their lands. Actually, they lease in land from small and marginal farmers. The other big land holders are just nominal cultivators, and depend largely on sharing of produce of their land with their tenant cultivators. They enter 'into unrecorded, exploitative agreements with their tenants—the share-croppers'⁵. In this pattern of farming the share-croppers invest their capital and put in their labour, but have no legal status as tenants. They are further exploited in being made to give an extremely high percentage of the produce as rent. As, with new technology and commercial farming, cultivation has become

³ Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. II, England : Penguin, 1968, p. 1053.

⁴ Government of India, New Delhi, *National Sample Survey : 26th Round* (July 1971 September 1972). Data in regard to size-distribution of holdings, presented in this paper, are collected from NSS (26th Round).

⁵ A. M. Khursro, *Economics of Land Reform and Farm Size in India*, Madras : Macmillan Company of India, 1973, p. 21.

very profitable, the big farmer group has attracted new recruits from amongst persons with essentially non-agricultural background. They are retired government officers and professionals who come in with both skill and money to invest in agricultural activities. By and large their farms are located in the urban fringe.

The big farmers are the most affluent sections of the rural population, and have extensive social contacts. They are in general fairly educated, and are widely informed about new technology and various development programmes. Although there is no exact correspondence between the agrarian structure and the caste structure, a certain linkage between the two is discernible. The big farmers belong to the dominant local castes, although they are generally not at the apex of the traditional caste hierarchy.⁶ The introduction of universal adult franchise and the dynamics of electoral politics have strengthened their position. Their dominant social and economic status is frequently reflected in their political status.

The medium sized farmers constitute the second layer of the agrarian structure. It has been estimated that 18.99 per cent of holdings are in the size group of 2.03 to 10.12 hectares, and the operated area for the size group comprises 53.01 per cent of the total area. The medium sized farmers can further be split into upper size (4.05-10.12 hectares) and lower size (2.03-4.04 hectares) groups. The number of holdings included in the former size group constitutes 11.16 per cent, and the operated area comes to 30.40 per cent of the total area. In the case of the latter size group, the number of holdings comes to 17.83 per cent, and the operated area comprises 22.61 per cent. Thus the average size of holdings for the upper size group is 6.02 hectares, while that for the lower size group is only 2.80 hectares.

The upper medium-sized farmers share some of the important characteristics of the big farmers. Their literacy rate is relatively high, and their caste membership is largely analogous to that of the big farmers. By and large the upper medium-sized farmers

⁶ Andre Beteille, *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 93.

belong to the dominant local castes. They are in general favourably disposed towards new technology. A large number of them have invested in improving the quality of land, and for building up an appropriate infrastructure for modernised farming. This has yielded them high farm income. As income is a significant input in rural power equation, the upper middle farmers wield considerable authority. In contrast, the lower medium sized farmers, in terms of caste and educational background, constitute a mixed group. Again, in terms of response to new technology and income level, they are a heterogeneous group.

The small-sized farmers constitute the largest group in terms of holding, but the smallest one in terms of operated area. According to NSS, 67.93 per cent of the holdings in India are distributed in less than 2.3 hectares size group, but the operated area comprises 24.16 per cent only. A combination of factors has led to the rise of a large number of small holdings. The mounting population pressure on land, the fragmentary effect of various inheritance legislations, and the breakdown of village isolation and the weakening of the joint family ties are important contributory forces. The increase in area under small holdings can also be attributed to machination by big farmers to evade ceiling laws through notional partitioning of land within their families.⁷

The small farmers are essentially subsistence farmers. In terms of creating surpluses after meeting bare family expenses or in terms of generating job opportunities for the family members, the small farmers are generally uneconomic units. In the words of V. M. Dandekar, '..... a small farm is that which does not provide a net farm income sufficient for the subsistence of the farm family.'⁸ Inevitably, therefore, the small farm does not leave any surplus for investment in land development. The result is continuous decline in its physical capital, and, naturally, the process is reflected in the deteriorating living standards of the small farmer and his family. According to several studies the

⁷ H. Laxminarayan and S. S. Tyagi, 'Some Aspects of Size-Distribution of Agricultural Holdings', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 9, 1976, p. 1639.

⁸ *Seminar on Problems of Small Farmers*, Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1968, p. ix.

bulk of borrowings of the farmers in this category is spent for meeting household rather than farm needs. Nearly 60 to 70 per cent of their borrowings are intended to cover household expenses which show that the small farmers have recurrently deficit family budgets.⁹ Only a small part of their borrowed money is spent on farm development. The spectre of rural poverty is manifested in an acute form among the small farmers and the landless peasantry.

In this situation some tendencies become conspicuous. Firstly, an important part of income of a small farmers generally emanates from his sale of labour. As one goes down the line, one notices it more and more. Secondly, a sizeable amount of leasing-out is noticed among the small farmers. Here again the process is most manifest among the small farmers in lower size group who are generally known as marginal farmers. As one writer, while discussing the dynamics of tendency, points out, the hold of the marginal farmers on land 'is becoming increasingly precarious'.¹⁰ In Punjab about 80 per cent marginal farmers do not cultivate; in Haryana, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh the proportion of non-cultivating marginal cultivators comes to 68 per cent, 54 per cent, and 47 per cent respectively. It is thus seen that a large number of small farmers particularly in the lower size group have actually sunk down into the class of agricultural labourers.

The small farmers, in terms of caste and educational background, are a mixed group, although the bulk of them in the lower size group of land holding appear to be illiterate and members of non-dominant castes. A good number of them in several parts of the country belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.¹¹ Their low social and economic status accounts for their low bargaining capacity, and hence, for their insignificant share in spoils of rural development.

At the base of the agrarian structure are the agricultural labourers. In recent years there has occurred a significant rise

⁹ G. Parthasarathy, *The Green Revolution and the Weaker Sections*, Bombay Thacker & Company, 1971, p. 18.

¹⁰ Dalip S. Swami, *Dynamics of Tenancy System in India* (unpublished paper), p. 22.

¹¹ S. N. Dubey and Ratna Murdia, *Administration of Policy and Programmes for Backward Classes in India*, Bombay : Somaiya Publications, 1976, p. 137.

in their number. According to 1971 census they constituted 30.71 per cent of the rural population. The phenomenal growth of population, the increasing splintering of land holdings and the growing leasing-out by the small farmers—all these have combined in the direction of multiplying the number of agricultural labourers. The agricultural labourers are mostly low caste people. There is a huge concentration of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members among them. According to the 1971 census, 31.90 per cent and 10.38 per cent of the agricultural labourers belonged to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. The great majority of them have no formal education. They have extremely low economic status. Although some recent studies have indicated a certain rise in wages of agricultural labour, their wages have generally remained depressed.¹² Actually they are not politically mobilized to compel their employers to raise their wages nor can they influence decisively the policy makers and executors in ameliorating their woeful economic conditions.

The share-croppers, along with the agricultural labourers, constitute the most submerged section of the rural population. Since in a rural society, land ownership is the most important source of social status, and since both the share-croppers and the labourers have no claim to land, they are held in low esteem. But in terms of status there is a significant difference between these two categories of landless people. The share-croppers cultivate other men's land with their labour and capital, and are co-sharers of the produce. Practically there is no supervision over their work. But the labourers work under the direct supervision of their employers, and are only paid wages. Thus the former enjoy more status than do the labourers. As Ramakrishna Mukherjee says: '.... as a share-cropper the peasant still remained a grihastha or husband man, and therefore socially he ranked in the same or nearly the same level as that of a ryot.... He would not, therefore, be considered to belong to the group of Kisans or agricultural labourers, a group which is socially placed lower

¹² Deepak Lal observes that '.... real agricultural wages have risen in India during the period 1956-57 to 1970-71', 'Agricultural Growth, Real Wages and the Rural Poor in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 26 1976, p. A-59. However, this is not accepted in several field-level studies published in *Economic and Political Weekly*. A number of studies actually emphasise fall, rather than rise in wages.

than the former.¹³ However, in terms of economic position and status on land, the agricultural labourers and the share-croppers constitute one category of cultivators. Similarly, the lower small farmers (popularly known as marginal farmers) and the agricultural labourers have some important characteristics in common. The interface between them is provided by their inter-changeability of roles. In several States a large number of marginal farmers have lost their hold over land and have joined the ranks of the agricultural labourers, while the distribution among the agricultural labourers of several lakh hectares of surplus land surrendered has given them a certain status on land. Besides, an important part of income of the lower small farmers emanates from labour, and naturally this brings about a convergence of their interests with those of the agricultural labourers.¹⁴

Thus the agricultural population can be re-classified into three categories : big-upper medium sized farmers, lower medium sized-upper small sized farmers, and lower small sized farmers-agricultural labourers. Of course, there is a certain tentativeness about this classificatory scheme and further probe is necessary to make it reliable. However, in the mean time, the policy makers and the administrators can see whether this modified classification of the agricultural population can provide a more useful basis for planning and administering the development programmes for the second and the third categories of the population. For instance, in the case of the third group more emphasis may be laid on fixation and enforcement of appropriate wage rates, while in the case of the second category the main thrust of development has possibly to be oriented towards better farm organisation.

However, as we have said, this classificatory scheme is tentative, and its implications for planning and administration can adequately be spelt out only after very careful study. For the present we adopt the existing categorisations—big farmers, medium sized farmers, small sized farmers, and agricultural labourers. While the main criterion of this classification is one's status on land, other criteria

¹³ *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, Berlin : Academic Verlag, 1957, p. 50.

¹⁴ A study by IIM, Ahmedabad, entitled *Rural Development for Rural Power* CMA Monograph (No. 63) shows that 43 per cent of average household income of the marginal farmers in a taluk in Gujarat is drawn from wages.

such as caste background and level of education are not altogether unimportant. As we have seen, in the case of the big farmers and agricultural labourers, caste and educational delineation is clearly marked. In this respect, while the upper medium sized farmers come close to big farmers, the lower small farmers are nearer to agricultural labourers. For the other groups such as the lower medium sized farmers and the upper small sized farmers the situation is one of enormous heterogeneity. This again is a source of weakness for these groups. Since their group personality is diffuse, it is difficult to integrate and organise their needs. This may act as a constraint on planning and administration.

As we collect and combine the threads of discussion, we get a profile of the rural power structure. Since land and income constitute the main base of power, the allocation of power broadly coincides with the distribution of land and income. We have seen that there is gross inequality of land and income in the rural areas. Obviously then the rural power equation is sharply unequal. There is actually an accumulative convergence of these elements. The accumulation of land and income in a group leads to accumulation of power in it. Naturally land, income and power are concentrated in the same set of individuals, whereas the person having no or little possession of land have practically no role in the power dynamics in the rural areas. A certain correspondence between the agrarian structure at its apex and bottom, and the Caste structure has served to reinforce the rural inequality. It has been noted that the big and the upper medium-sized farmers, on the one hand, and the lower small-sized farmers and agricultural labourers, on the other, have by and large clear caste boundaries. The social sanction for the system of accumulative inequality is frequently mixed up with religious sanction. And, moreover, notwithstanding the convergence of economic interests at the lower levels of the agrarian structure, the rural poor are not mobilised over the wide expanse of the country and hence, there is no resistance in general to the manipulation by the powerful groups of rural development institutions. The wide variations in level of education between groups is also a factor responsible for dissimilar levels of manipulative capacity.

In order to have a fuller view of the rural power structure, it is necessary to relate it to the overall development process. Since

the advent of planning, extensive development activities have been undertaken in the rural areas, and massive public monies have been pumped in. But mainly because of a vastly unequal power equation, there has occurred vastly unequal allocation of development facilities, notwithstanding the avowed objective of equality. The big and the upper medium-sized farmers have been the greatest beneficiaries while the small farmers have been denied major benefits, although the latter represent 60 per cent of the rural households.¹⁵ The following tables are intended to illustrate the actual situation in regard to credit.

TABLE 1

*Primary Agricultural Credit Societies—Loans and Advances
advanced to Farmers of Different Holding Size 1976-77*

(in Rs. thousand)

Upto 1 hectare	1-2 hectares	2-4 hectares	4-8 hectares	above 8 hectares
1775243	2431454	2750640	2607849	2139948

Source: Reserve Bank of India, Statistical Statements relating to Co-operative Movement in India, 1976-77, Part I.

TABLE 2

*Land Development Banks—Loans and Advances to Farmers
of Different Holding Size in 1976-77*

(in Rs. thousand)

Upto 1 hectare	1-2 hectares	2-4 hectares	4-8 hectares	above 8 hectares
196174	326802	312405	266655	282752

Source: Reserve Bank of India, Statistical Statements relating to Co-operative Movement in India, 1976-77, Part I.

¹⁵ See in this connection C. H. Hanumantha Rao, *Technological Change and Distribution of Gains in Indian Agriculture*, Delhi: Macmillan Company of India, 1975, Ch. 11.

TABLE 3

*Land Development : Per Farmer Loan in Different
Size Groups in 1976-77*

(in Rupees)				
Upto 1 hectare	1-2 hectares	2-4 hectares	4-8 hectares	above 8 hectares
4078.54	5722.52	6297.72	8611.77	16027.20

Source : Compiled from Statistical Statements relating to
Co-operative Movement in India.

It is thus seen that the small farmers have been grossly disfavoured in the credit allocative system. It is further seen that the worst sufferers in this respect are the lower small-sized farmers. Almost a similar profile emerges when one examines any other important aspect of rural development. Several micro studies have emphasised a close alliance between the irrigation bureaucracy and the dominant rural groups with the result that the latter manipulate and secure the bulk of irrigation facilities. In this connection, a study of the Sarda Canal in Uttar Pradesh is significant.¹⁶ According to it, the big farmers were able to manoeuvre and influence the administrative machinery in the canal area with so much ingenuity that their fields were ensured plentiful supply of water. The small farmers were the worst sufferers in the process. Other studies also have referred to similar experience.¹⁷

The successful manipulation of the development process by the rich farmers has its main source in their capacity to secure electoral support for the ruling party. Several studies have shown that the Congress Party is based 'largely on those who wield local power'.¹⁸ Since the rural rich wield local power and are vote mobilisers for the ruling party, it becomes possible for them to manoeuvre and

¹⁶ D. Thorner, 'The Weak and the Strong on the Sarda Canal' *Land and Labour in India*, Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1952.

¹⁷ See, in this connection P. H. Prasad, *Economic Benefits in the Kosi Command Area*, Patna : ANS Institute of Social Studies, 1972 (mimeo).

¹⁸ Myron Weiner, 'Traditional Role, Performance and the Development of Modern Political Parties : The Indian Case', *Journal of Politics*, 1964.

obtain the lion's share of the spoils of development. They mobilise electoral support on the basis of patronage demands which are fulfilled through successful manipulation of the rural development institutions. At the same time, the spoils of development create new political resources which further reinforce the power base of the rural rich. The dynamics of electoral politics and the development process have worked in the direction of favouring the rural rich.

The introduction of adult franchise has endowed the rural poor with the right to vote, while the forging of several contemporary links in the agrarian structure has served to reinforce the traditional dependence of the poor upon the rich. The tendency of both the developments has been strengthening of the rural rich. The links are many and varied, and some of them may be identified here. Firstly, a part of development benefits filters down to the rural poor through caste channel. The common caste background of the rural rich and a section of the rural poor at locality level enables the latter to obtain certain benefits, however marginal, through the influence of the former. This in return secures for the rich the continuous support of the section thus benefited. At the same time, the impact of this process has been the intensification of caste fissures in the ranks of the rural poor which in turn has the effect of disabling them to effectively organise themselves. Secondly, the rural rich use their greater social and political contacts to help the members of the rural poor in getting small benefits of development. This serves to enlist for the former a certain amount of support of the latter. Lastly, the various sections of the rural poor are economically dependent upon the rural rich. The network of dependencies is woven around a variegated web of relationships. As wage-earners working on the farms of the rich farmers, as share-croppers, and as borrowers of money from the rich farmers, the rural poor are frequently connected with the rural rich in a nexus of subordinate-dominant relationship. An important input for the electoral support which the rural rich mobilise for the ruling party, is actually the economic dependence of the vast multitude of the rural poor upon them.¹⁹

¹⁹ A. H. Sonjee, in course of his study of political change in a village in Western India, points out that the prosperous *patidars* have always received political support from the bulk of the Vasava caste people mainly because the

Thus the enormous complexities of the rural relations and the vastly inadequate organisation for the rural poor, stand in the way of their sharing significantly in the benefits of development. Discontent erupts now and then. But again because of complexities of the rural society and the rural poor's lack of organisation to match the coercion of the existing authority structure, the sporadic agitations of the agricultural labourers and similarly placed other segments of the rural poor are suppressed and/or lost in the meshy farmer agitations. It has been estimated that union does not cover more than 2 per cent of the agricultural labour.²⁰

The affluent sections of the peasantry have increasingly enhanced their strength in the legislatures. In the first Lok Sabha the landowners stood at 21 per cent. In the fourth Lok Sabha it went up to 30 per cent. The farmer lobby has increased its strength in the sixth Lok Sabha to 39.5 per cent. It has been estimated that occupation-wise landowners occupy the most dominant position in the national legislature. In the case of most of the States a similar pattern is discernible.²¹

The increasing strength of the rural rich obliged the big bourgeoisie to conciliate the demands of the farmer. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry expressed serious doubt about the wisdom of the public policy of structural change in agriculture. Some important members argued that the greatest impediment to agricultural improvement lay in ideological and dogmatic attitudes of Government in matters of land reforms and land ceilings policy.²² The Federation further made a plea for larger outlay on agriculture in the Fourth Plan, as the big bourgeoisie felt that increase in agricultural income would create more demand for consumer goods.

However, while adopting a conciliatory attitude to the demands of the rural rich the big bourgeoisie were at the same time determined to retain their control of the state machinery. Thus when

farm labourers employed for the former are drawn mostly from the latter. See *Democracy and Political Change in Village India*, New Delhi : Orient Longman 1971, pp. xxiii-xxv.

²⁰ This is contained in a statement made by the General Secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha. *The Hindu*, Bangalore, November 17, 1982.

²¹ Amal Roy, 'Federalism: Consensus to Confrontation' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, October, 2, 1982.

²² FICCI, *Proceedings of the Annual Session*, 1966.

in 1978-79 the rural rich under the leadership of Charan Singh made a desperate bid for political hegemony, the big bourgeoisie perceived danger and rallied round Indira Gandhi. Since 1980 elections the big bourgeoisie have been exercising a greater control over state power.

Recently the Planning Commission in their Report on the Sixth Five-Year Plan have projected change in sectoral composition of the GDP for 1994-95. This is being summarised below :

Sector	1979-80	1994-95
Primary	35.13 %	26.71 %
Secondary	26.37 %	31.42 %
Tertiary	38.50 %	41.87 %

This shows that the primary sector, consisting of agriculture and allied activities, will account for only a little over 25 per cent of the GDP in 1994-95. When one considers this along with the large mass of agricultural labour force (according to the 1981 Census, agricultural workers constitute 66.69 per cent of the total number of workers in the country), one can envisage an extremely explosive situation 15 or 20 years later. There is thus likely to be more pauperisation of the rural poor which in turn is likely to breed more rural unrest.

In this anticipated situation lies the peril of the existing political system. But the moot question is : will it result in breakdown of the system ? All available evidence shows that the collapse of the system is unlikely. This is mainly because the ordinary people especially the rural poor, even now derive their main political impulses from the elites who are their immediate reference groups. This again is in part the result of a complex enmeshing of social, political, and economic relations, particularly in the countryside and is partly the outcome of consistent failure of the political parties with a radical ideology to organise the rural poor even on trade union lines. The failure of the left parties in this regard largely reflects their eagerness to forge adjustment with the demands of the rich farmers in order to buy votes.²³

²³ B. M. 'Agrarian Prices and the Left' in *Economic and Political Weekly* October 23, 1982.

TOWARDS A FULLER PARTNERSHIP OF WOMEN AND MEN IN THE NEW HUMANITY

RACHEL MATHEW

'You find yourself by denying yourself,
but not by being denied.'¹

—*Marie Tulip.*

It seems we need more than two thousand years to understand the full meaning of the gospel and the mission of the Church. The Word of God is a revitalizing, transforming power which directs humanity to new dimensions of thought and living. We have to grow towards a fuller life—to the perfection of Jesus Christ—the Head. Let us return to the 'rock from which we are hewn out' and attain fuller partnership of women and men in the new humanity.

What does the Bible say of women—her nature and role expectations in Creation, Incarnation and in the effective continuous process of Incarnation.

The Biblical anthropology

A. In Creation

The traditional understanding of the early biblical religions is seen in the creation hymn of Genesis Ch. 1 and also in Ch 2.

The basic faith is that human being is a creature created by God, in the image of God (Gen. 1 : 26).

The bipolarity of sex: 'Adam' is a collective term meaning 'human' (see modern translations). In Gen. 1 : 26 we read that mankind is created as man and woman. The explanation for the bipolarity is given in Ch. 2.

Male and female together form the human. It shows the essential human nature, i.e., the sociability of mankind. There is

¹ Marie Tulip, 'Women and the Kingdom' in *International Review of Mission*, p. 138.

in human the eternal urge and longing for the other. Every normal, honest, individual would admit that he/she has this inner urge for the other. The celibate is no exception. (Man-woman is explained differently in Ch. 2). The unity and oneness, the impossibility of human without the partner, the sociability and solidarity of the human species are expounded in this story. The fact of man-woman-human is the same in both chapters. The writer confesses the complementarity of both by saying 'the flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bones. He is satisfied and has found her/his suitable partner (Gen. 2 : 23).

Man-Woman relationship

Partnership : Man and woman are partners who share their life, their privileges and responsibilities equally. They are suitable to each other. 'Woman is man's only compeer amid the rest of creation'.²

Intimate relationship : God formed them as male and female. The affinity between them is the humanness. There is a yearning of the flesh; but this urge is not merely physical (cf. Ps. 84 : 3) 'The union of man and woman in marriage is set on the highest and most integral plane. It is a union of persons who together make up a new person,'³ a person is moulded through persons.

In the biblical understanding of anthropology, it is clear that person alone cannot fulfil the purpose of Creation. A companion is required—a partner who fits in all the aspects of human life. For a fuller, mature growth a person equal to oneself is necessary. The partner must be able to share at all levels—in spiritual, intellectual and physical levels. If man requires merely the physical intimacy, i.e. can have it with any of the opposite sex. But in God's sight the true humanity is found in the totality of man-woman relation in which the entire personality is involved.

The purpose of creation : In Gen. 1 : 27 we read, God has created them male and female so that they may multiply on the earth and have dominion over all His Creation.

² Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis*, p. 75.

³ *Ibid.*

Joint responsibility: The responsibility of procreation and preservation of the created world falls on humans; man and woman are co-workers with God. This responsibility can be fulfilled only through the full partnership of woman and man. Man alone, or woman alone cannot accomplish the divine purpose. The continuation of humanity is their joint responsibility.

Family: This partnership is not exhaustive with the procreation of another human being. For the preservation of humanity, mere physical aspects of co-habitation and rearing of children are insufficient. So with Adam and Eve God has constituted the family, the basic unit where the person in the image of God would be moulded.

In the flood story we see how Noah's family is saved to be the nucleus of the new humanity (cf. Gen. Ch. 9). Again when we look into the patriarchal stories, God calls Sarah (Ch. 17:15f; 18:15, etc.) along with Abraham to bring about the people of God. God makes the covenant with Abraham and Sarah separately and blesses them individually so that they may join together in partnership in His divine purpose. The importance of women in the promise and covenant is thus understood. The roles played by the mother-woman are equally important as that of the father-man.

Male domination and the consequent fall of woman

The Fall: In the story of the Fall in Gen. 3, we get a clear picture of the human nature. The human, who is created in the image of God is capable of transgressions. He revolted against his Creator and lost his innocence. His desire and lust (ἐπιθυμία) is evident here. He aspires for knowledge and immortality, a genuine desire, but premature and hasty. He has forgotten that, after all, he is only a creature and should have waited to receive it from his benevolent father, the Creator. *Epithumia*, impatience and pride leads to 'fall'. The image of God is distorted and humanity is being alienated from God and from His immediate presence. He is alienated from God his Creator, from man/woman—his fellow creatures and from nature. The Fall is a collective experience and the consequent suffering and alienation is also collective.⁴

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

The Downfall of women : Man was bestowed with authority and power to have dominion over God's creation, a responsibility to preserve nature and mankind. But in course of time he lusted for power, to conquer and subjugate his fellow-beings. Women had to face the brunt of this lust. The scriptures reveal this masculine domination. This is reflected in man's theology of God, his understanding of woman who is being created as a 'fit partner' (cf. Gen. 2 : 18) for him. Woman has been reduced to the level of a non-human thing.

Now it is easier for us to understand the inferior status of woman. Here in this story the woman is pictured as the temptress, beguiling man into misdeeds, and the male finds fault with the female—'The woman who you have given to be with me. . . gave me and I ate cf. Gen. 3 : 12. He is trying to justify his position by blaming his partner and the God who created them both. She is pictured as one who is vulnerable and weak. God is neither sparing him nor her.

The Pain at Childbirth : (Gen. 3 : 16) The ability to conceive and deliver is a great blessing. Procreation is a 'sharing in the mystery of creation and fruitfulness which God has graciously, bestowed upon the creatures'⁵. But the excruciating pain of childbirth is a fact of life, known to all. In Ch. 3 it is described as punishment. It is an explanation of the existential fact of life which the women experienced. So they explained it as a punishment as a consequence of the disordered world of man, in the making of which both man and woman had their share.⁶

Subordination of women : In 3 : 16 comes the domination of the male. The urge of woman towards man to be possessed and that of man to possess. 'He shall rule over you' (cf. Gen. 3 : 16). The equal partnership is lost and she becomes part of his possessions, an inferior partner created for the sake of man and his pleasures.

This certainly is against the intention of God in creating humans as male and female. This comes as a result of man's transgressions of the commandments of God. Man and woman

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

are alienated. 'The Yahwist recognized and cheerfully acquiesced in the social order of his people which accorded to woman an inferior status and declared her in theory at least, the chattel of her husband.'⁷

'The story of fall is a paradigm for human conduct',⁸ The suitable partner—the fit companion—becomes a helper in servitude. In the Psalms God is addressed as the help of David (*cf.* Ps. 146, 121 : 1) God is the helper to those who call upon His name'. Does this mean that God is subservient to man? In the same way the word 'help' in Genesis 2 : 18 does not mean that woman is subservient to man. Of a truth man is helpless without the woman.

Liberation through Incarnation : This fallen state is redeemed by Incarnation where God seeks the help of Mary—woman to participate in the redemptive act. It was there in Incarnation that woman, the object of man's contempt and who had been reduced to a 'thing' was restored as the true image of God. It is from her the true image of God did spring for the whole of humanity. Here Mary represents humanity, not merely femininity. St. Paul speaking in Gal., 'born of the seed of the woman' refers to the fact of Incarnation. The humanity of God, thus, did find its way into the world through a woman ; when God desired to become man he did not abhor the virgin's womb. She was found fit 'to take flesh' and through her the threshold of salvation was opened to all mankind.

A Theological justification

Male theology : We have already seen above that after the Fall man began to dominate woman in every field. In the revelatory experience of God, men writers began to depict God as a male being. The pronoun used for God clearly states this male distinction.

The biblical language strongly influences the language of liturgy used in the Christian Church. The believers, hence took for granted the 'maleness' of God.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

This notion of God is not true. Sexuality is something that is natural to humans. God the Creator is above and beyond sexual distinctions. One should not say that God is a eunuch. God is asexual. Sexuality does not belong to the essential nature of God.

The father figure of God, pictured in the minds of even children—is obviously masculine. In the Hebrew monotheistic religion where there is no option for a female deity, this is inevitable. In the Old Testament, the analogy of the husband-wife relation is used to denote the relationship of God and the people of God. In the New Testament for this relation between Christ and the Church, similar analogy is used, that of bride and bridegroom, thus consciously form the concept of a male-God. If we use human analogies, we should use both the analogies of man and woman.

Image of God: God has created human as male and female in His own image. This image does not convey the physical nature of human beings, nor the sexual. But the image of God in man is seen in the capacity of man and woman to communicate with God. This is the unique nature that distinguishes humans from the animal world. This enables them, to have fellowship with their Creator. The love and devotion of man to God is his essential nature, and this is what makes him human. If he is alienated from God, this image is distorted, and man will have only base characteristics. The image of God, gives man a higher plane above other creatures. There is no doubt that this is equally shared by man and woman. (Gen. 1 : 27).

Maleness of Jesus: Another argument which is often pointed out to emphasise the male supremacy is the maleness of Jesus Christ. Jesus, in the incarnation of God took flesh from Mary and not from Joseph the male. He is God became human; perhaps this might be the reason that he remained unmarried, so that he need not exercise his function as male. His mission was to execute the God-human and not man-male functions.

Mariology refutes masculine claims

The part played by Mary in Incarnation is very significant. The unique 'Yes' of Mary represents the 'Yes' of humanity to

accept Jesus Christ. Through her humble faith and submission God's plan for the redemption of the alienated humans became possible. The distorted 'Image of God' thus regained for humanity. It is 'a freely willed conception receiving for the world, the grace that the Incarnation brings. It is a true partnership with God's action for mankind.'⁹ Thus it is quite clear that there is no ontological support for male domination.

Humans in the service of God

In the religious field: Man is essentially religious in nature. The Image of God in man, makes it possible for humans to have intimate relation—communion with God. This relationship, is expressed in the form of prayers and praises that emerge from love. The gracious love of God and the loving devotion of man respond to each other. This devotion makes the people a worshipping community. The worship is completed only through ministry—the ministry of witness and service. Even very primitive people were engaged in worship and sacrifices—thank offering for the grace of the deity. In the ancient cultures where they had simple religions, men and women maintained equal partnership in the worship and sacrifices. This is evident in the prevedic culture in India as well as in the patriarchal period of Jewish religion.

In Hinduism: In the prevedic culture, women had an active role in religion, participating in the sacrifices along with her husband. The wife is known as *Sahadharmini*—who is a partner in performing the *dharma* of sacrifices. Their religion was very simple. The husband and wife together performed the religious rites in front of the fire. It was her duty to light the fire of the hearth.

In the epics also she maintained an equal status. Marriage was considered a sacrament. It was a spiritual union of human beings, undergone for the performance of the religious duties. Husband and wife were colleagues in *dharma*. But this status soon changed. As the Brahminic religion developed, religion and sacrifices became the prerogative of priests, and women were pushed to the background along with the laity. Since education

⁹ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Mary Mother of God*, p. 13.

was mainly based on religion, girls were denied the right of education and that led to an inferior position.

It was a complete denial for women to the threshold of knowledge. Thus they were declared ignorant. Her intellect was clogged, and unorientated. The woman who was once a *Sahadharmini* in the vedic rituals remained a custodian of rituals and customs and superstitions only.¹⁰

In the Bible : We see a parallel development, a gradual deterioration of the status of women in the Jewish religion. Women who enjoyed freedom and status in the patriarchal times were denied it in the priestly period. The priestly cult was established, giving importance to rituals and sacrifices. The priestly functions were set apart to the Levites, a special tribe particularly called to perform the religious rites. In Judaism, developed under the leadership of priests, the concept of sex discriminations also increased. In the Rabbinic period it reached its climax and the women were deprived of their position, both in religious observance as well as social functions.

Superstitions and impurities attached to women

Biological factors : In the divine purpose, God has blessed women with a womb, to cradle and nurture the beginnings of a new life. Male semen and female ova come together in her womb to form the new creature. Prior to this conception, she is prepared every month. Her reproductive cycle enables her to be pure and ready. The monthly period of menstruation is a biological factor. But this issue of blood, according to the priestly cult, was regarded as impure. The ritual cleanliness and impurities attached to women placed her as untouchable and unholy. She was denied entrance into the holy places. In this situation she was refused her rightful place in religion. These were merely innovations of the priestly religion.

Sex discrimination

In Jewish religion the strict pharisee might pray ' Lord, I thank thee for thou hast not created me as a gentile nor a dog, nor a

¹⁰ Cf. Shakambari Jayal, *Status of Women in the Epics*, p. 162



woman.' So much ill feeling was cherished in the heart of the strict Jews against the woman. No doubt the priests were responsible for the development of this attitude.

In the Holiness code there are rules concerning the issue of blood for a woman. She is declared impure while she has her periods. Unfortunately if the woman gives birth to a girl-child her period of impurity is longer than that of the birth of a baby-boy. (Lev. 12 : 5f.)

When we read carefully the regulations in Leviticus, we would find out that both, men who have the secretion of semen and women who have an issue of blood are unclean (Lev. Ch. 15). Then why are women alone discriminated against on the ground of their sex. It is certain that this discrimination is due to prejudice inherent in the Jewish tradition and not based on a just attitude to the woman.

Sex Symbol: These sorts of restrictions and misconceptions are seen in all the ancient religions. The wrong concepts based on her biological nature had long lasting effects. The woman has become a sex-symbol, not a person. She became a chattel, to be possessed for she is the medium through which the continuation of the patriarchal family becomes possible. She has become part of his property that he should protect, because she is vulnerable and weak. She is regarded as an object of temptation. So she should be protected and kept indoors, with a *purdah* so that she may not be a temptation to other men. She becomes a mere 'plaything' to be enjoyed by man and to act according to his whims and fancies. Thus she was reduced to a mere sexual object.

Transition from *Sahadharmini* to *Pathivrita*

In the Hindu religion, this position is legalised by Manu and according to him, she is a completely dependent being.¹¹ From birth to death she is to be under the protection of the male—father-husband-son. She was completely confined to home with her household duties. Thus the transition from *Sahadharmini*, who enjoyed an equal position of a friend to that of *Pativrata*—a devotee, took place. This change in the role expectation of women

¹¹ Nikunja Vihari Banerjee, *Studies in the Dharma Sastra of Manu*, p. 58.

left her with no education, no freedom, no independent thinking and judgement. She lost her own personality and was immersed in the personality of her husband. The very female nature became inferior to that of the masculine nature. 'Inferior intellectual capacity, greater vanity and weaker sexual instincts supposedly the inherent traits of her character, were the reasons forwarded for the loss of her rights, liberties and intellectual freedom'.¹² The downfall of women was not due to her organic defects, but due to the cultural pattern of society which denied all intellectual, educational, religious and property rights to women.

The hold of cultural impact on personality development

Cultures hold on personality development is important. The stereotyped roles and responsibilities attached to females label women as a subservient group. The patient, emotional, intuitive, dependent, illogical female is no match for the assertive, creative, logical, intelligent and independent male. A child wants love and acceptance from the people around. So his/her behaviour attunes to that which is appreciated by the society. Thus sex difference is felt even as a child. We tend to become what was expected of us.¹³

Understanding through the ages

In the Bible, from the beginning to the end we can see diverse attitudes regarding women. We have already seen the divine intention in creating women—her role as an equal partner, with equal privileges and responsibilities to that of man. Again we have seen the deterioration of that status with the development of the priestly cult. Now, as we look into the Bible we see conflicting and contradictory concepts.

Prophetic period: Prophets were always conscious of the contemporary evils and corruption of society. They were people who fought against the unjust conventions and priestly ritualistic attitudes. They stood for high moral standards and always called for the return to God—to the original purpose of God. Their attitude towards women was positive.

¹² Shakambari Jayal, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

¹³ Cf. Henriette Santer 'Women, Men & Psychology', in *Theology*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 706, July 1982; p. 262f.

Leading women

The part played by women in the life of Moses is important. His mother, his sister and the princess of Pharaoh had played significant roles in the liberation of the people of God (Ex. 2 : 1ff). They were not just in the background, Miriam was a recognised leader along with Moses and Aaron (Ex. 15 : 21). During the time of the Judges, we read about a very important person, Deborah the prophetess, judge and counsellor. She was a great politician as well as a warrior. Her role unmistakably was that of a great leader. (Judges 4 : 4f)

Hannah's role as a mother of Samuel and her devotion is expressive of the nature of faith which women experienced. (I Sam. Chs. 1 & 2) The wife of the great prophet Isaiah (Is. 8 : 3) is known in the Bible as a prophetess. This may denote just the feminine term, but the joint witness and partnership in ministry may be understood.

In Politics : During the time of the kings also, women leaders and queens were common, although in the biblical accounts their influence had adverse effects. But it is a fact that they were zealous devotees of their own religions.

The story of Esther maintains the role of women in the redemptive mission of God. (Esther. 4 : 14).

In the Wisdom Literature : The wisdom writers had very high opinion and expectation of women. The word wisdom itself is personified as a woman and the wise woman is praised as the highest that man can aspire to Prov. 31 : 10 f. She is an asset to the family, a companion and *Sahadharmini* to her husband. Her role is not contained in the household only. She has a place in society. She is a good administrator and is busy with her responsibilities.

The respect and adoration of a wise woman is highlighted, while contempt for the foolish and the temptress is upheld (Prov. 6 : 24, Ch. 7 : 1f.)

The wife of Nabel acts as a very wise woman, and thus saves her family (Isaiah Ch. 25). On the other hand the wife of Job behaves foolishly and she is ridiculed as a fool (Job. 2 : 10). The

wise counsel of the mother to her son (Prov. 31: 1f) to keep away from the ways of evil is also noted by the wisdom writer. The wise men keep high moral standards and they condemn sexual indulgence. Mothers were respected equally with the fathers (Prov. 1 : 4). In the ancient Hindu culture also this was a true phenomenon.

Thus it is a fact that women as persons are respected in the Bible. Sarah, Ruth, Naomi, Deborah, Esther, Hannah are just examples only. There are many others like them.

Jesus and the Women : We see that Jesus began his ministry, following the true Old Testament tradition. His contemporaries took him as a revolutionary, in his attitude towards women, especially when the status of women as at its low ebb in his own and the contemporary Graeco-Roman society. Jesus regarded women as persons—'Is she not also the daughter of Abraham?' (cf. Lk. 13 : 10f. v. 16).

We have already seen that in Jesus, it is the humanity of God that is expressed not the masculinity. Therefore, the woman, having the Image of God is able to have fellowship with Jesus, not as a sexual being, but a human being. He had many friends and followers among men and women. He loved them with the love of his father.

Why not a woman among the twelve ?

The patriarchal background and the male-oriented Jewish religion carried on the 'amphyctionic' concept of the tribe and hence the early Jewish Church conveniently assigned the twelve as patriarchs of the new Israel. They were to represent a patriarch. But in the gospels it is evident that Jesus had women among his disciples all along his ministry (Lk. 8 : 1f), women who ministered to him and accompanied him even upto the foot of the cross (Jn. 19 : 25). It was only the women disciples who were able to partake in his death agony on the cross and again it was the women disciples who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus (Lk. 24 : 1ff, 23 : 55-56). During the ministry of Jesus, he healed women who were impure in the sight of the priestly religion (Lk. 8 : 43ff) ; he was an advocate for them (Mk. 14 : 6), he taught women and

shared with them the profound aspects of his ministry (Lk. 10 : 38f). He accepted their administrations and listened to their prayers and blessed them. He pardoned the woman when caught in adultery (Jn. 8 : 1 ff). He even accused the men who were responsible for her fall. Jesus was setting an example to people who condemn the woman alone caught in adultery and was affirming that both man and woman are responsible for the misdeeds (cf. Deut. 22 : 22).

In the New Testament Church : Here we see the emergence of a new dimension—a new society—which was in accordance with the original plan of God. In the New Testament church, women had no restrictions in sharing the ministry with men (Acts 1 : 14). The house churches as well as the *diakonia* were initiated by women (Acts. 16 : 14ff, 18 : 26, 1 Cor. 16 : 19, etc.). In receiving the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, there was no discrimination. Paul recognised that the New humanity began in Jesus in which there is no difference between man and woman. All are equal in the sight of God (Gal. 3 : 28).

Women in the Mission of the Church : Throughout history women played a very significant role in the ministry of the church. Their vision and dedication superceded the forces that tried to suppress and debar them from active roles.

However, from the apostolic times we see a great conflict among the church fathers, especially in Paul, to accept the new dimension that Jesus had inaugurated. (cf. 1 Cor. 7 : 25). Leading Greek women like Phoebe and Lydia were exceptions. They struggled to make a breakthrough in their suppressed position although the early church respected their charismatic leadership and regarded them as co-workers (Romans 16 : 1-3, 6), and as follow heirs to eternal life (1 Peter 3 : 7). However, during the course of time, the church failed to give the woman equal share in the ministry of the Church.

Holy Spirit—the effective power of God

When our Lord sent out His apostles, he breathed on them the Holy Spirit of God. The spirit (*Ruah*) in the Semitic tongue is a feminine word. It is this feminine aspect of God that charac-

terised the extraordinary power which enable humans to carry out their responsibilities.

Ruah, when translated into the Greek language became a neuter term—*Pneuma*, and later when it came in Rome, in the Latin language it assumed the masculine gender—*Spiritus*.

It is interesting to note this transition of the original feminine concept to masculine through the neuter. One is called to search into the scriptures and discover the femininity of God. In India, *Sakti* power is regarded as a female deity. Perhaps it may be due to this reason that woman are endowed with great capacity for endurance (*Unobabhava*).

Paul's attitude towards woman

Pauline teachings concerning women seem to be very controversial. He encouraged women to take active roles in the ministry and recognised their contributions. Yet he requested women to be submissive and to keep silent in the church assemblies. Paul's contemporaries were afraid of the devastating effect of the new order of Christ upon the traditions and feared that the freedom enjoyed by women might lead to permissiveness.¹⁴

Church fathers : The attitude of Paul was carried over by some of the church fathers. With the emergence of monasticism and of ascetic ideals, woman lost her identity found in Jesus. To some of the church fathers she was a mere sexual being. They felt that the very presence of woman would have adverse effects on men. She was considered as a temptress and an insult to sex. No doubt, the celibate monks found them a barrier in their highest aspirations of having the deepest fellowship with God. She is considered the seat of all evil.¹⁵ They avoided women and marriage in order to have the highest spiritual life. Here we should remember the warning of Paul to Timothy (1 The. 4 : 2 ff) about those who would forbid marriage and eating of food to the believers. For them, even the natural sexual urges were a weakness and sin. They found women a barrier to exercise the right type

¹⁴ Pauline Webb, *Where are the Women?* Cf. p. 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

of ministry. Church fathers like St. Augustine played a significant role in making women inferior and her identity non-existent. One cannot forget the psychological reaction of Augustine who in his youth spent his life with wine and women. It was his conversion that brought about a change in him. Naturally he associated women with his sinful past. It was this experience that worked as a bulwark to develop his attitude to women and later persuaded him to promulgate the injunction to priests to desist from marriage. Marriage was regarded as a kind of licensed adultery.

In the Church there were many women who embraced celibacy. The celibate women were promised the privilege of becoming 'honorary men'.¹⁶ The women during this period were very active in the Church. They had great leadership and they involved themselves in every type of ministry. But as ordinary women they had only a secondary place.

Protestantism

With the emergence of Protestantism marriage was given equal status with that of celibacy. However the place of women still remained confined to the four walls of the home. Later Protestant churches began to recognise the role of women and some of them dared to receive them even to the ordained ministry.

In the Eastern Church : The Eastern Church recognised the place of women in the Church. The participation and responsibility of the women in the church grew. The Syriac word *bath queomo* designates the wife of a minister. It means the 'daughter of the covenant'. Here we see higher ideals set for women as the wife of a minister. Her place is in the covenant, her function as the wife of a minister raises her status. As she assumes more responsibilities, she becomes capable of acting as a fit companion and partner in the ministry. In the Coptic Church women used to assist in the Holy Qurbana, especially in administering the elements to the sick.

Missionary Movements : In the missionary movements, the wives of missionaries also had a sense of dedication and call, and they made significant contributions in the mission fields. The

¹⁶ Cf. Payne Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

Church was hesitant to send women as missionaries, but finally when they accepted them and sent them to various fields, they found that women had more access to the closed communities. They were capable of penetrating in the heart of the problems and recognising specific needs.

In the Church today: Most of the churches today recognise the joint responsibility of women in the ministry and accept them. Women are assuming responsibilities as they respond to the challenge of God's call. When God calls them the Church has no right to deny their rightful place in Christian Ministry.¹⁷ They should not be rejected. on the ground of being a woman. If they are, the Church then violates the very fundamental right of women in the presence of God.

In Baptism: Baptism, the sign and seal of our common discipleship, initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. Both women and men are admitted to the church through Baptism, to inherit the rights and privileges. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the Kingdom and of the life of the world to come. Through the gifts of faith, hope and love, baptism has a dynamic which embraces the whole of life, extends to all nations and anticipates the day when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord to the Glory of God the Father. The readiness of the churches in some places and times to allow differences of sex, race or social status to divide the body of Christ has further called into question the genuine baptismal unity of the Christian community, and has seriously compromised its witness. The need to recover baptismal unity is at the heart of the ecumenical task as it is central for the realisation of genuine partnership within the Christian communities.¹⁸

Ministry: God's purpose in Jesus is that all should share in the fellowship. The call for ministry is for all. The Holy Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel and empowers them to serve in hope and love. The Church is called to proclaim

¹⁷ Cf. Sheffield paper on 'Ministry and Worship'.

¹⁸ Cf. *Faith and Order* paper No. III, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, p.3.

and prefigure the Kingdom of God. It has to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom. This mission needs to be carried in political, social and cultural contexts. The Holy Spirit gives complementary gifts for this ministry.¹⁹

The diverse ministries : People of God are called to the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit which are bestowed on its members. In the ordained ministry, there is both the charism and the appointment.

Ordained Ministry : The Church ordains persons through the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the laying-on-of-hands. Priests are the ordained ministers, the persons who are publicly and continuously responsible. They have specific authority and responsibility. The chief responsibility is to assemble and build up the body of Christ through the ministry of the word and sacraments guiding in worship, mission and the caring ministry. They are representing Jesus to the community. So the authority is rooted in Jesus and received from the Father and conferred through the Holy Spirit. They are consecrated for the service. They should not be autocrats or impersonal functionaries. The authenticity of the ministry is in Jesus Christ who loved his people. He offered himself as a living sacrifice.

Women and men together : Where Christ is present human barriers are broken, the Church is to convey to the world, the image of a new humanity (Gal. 3 : 28). A deeper understanding of the comprehensiveness of ministry which reflects the independence of women and men needs to be more widely manifested in the life of the Church. An increasing number of churches have now come to the conclusion that there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women and many of them have subsequently proceeded to do so. Yet many churches hold that the tradition in this regard must not be changed.

Tradition : Our Tradition is the Christ event witnessed and experienced by the community of women and men. This helps us to continue the faith through centuries. Its fundamental ele-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20f.

ments are 'scripture, creeds, liturgies and the lived experience of the people of God in the Holy Spirit. The tradition we are living derives both from the tradition we have inherited as well as the experience of our own time and place'.²⁰

We have seen how in the Old Testament, the priestly religion influenced the downfall of women. So also in the New Testament, it is evident that the new understanding of the gospel was being followed, but soon the Church was established as a structure with the hierarchies of bishops, presbyters and deacons in the ministry. The ordained took up the pattern of the priesthood in the Old Testament. Again woman lost her partnership in the ministry. She was of course active in the Church and participated in the ministry, but only as an assistant to the men.

Now it is time for us to rethink the authority of our traditions in the light of the present understanding—of equal partnership of women and men which they share in the social, economic and cultural sphere. Today woman has proved her metal and is able to undertake any form of ministry. In politics, in the field of science and technology, in education, in family and society she is no less than man—her partner.

The twentieth century has no dearth of great women like Mother Teresa, Golda Mayer, Indira Gandhi, and many others. Through their dedication and service they have inspired and challenged the world to accept the leadership and service of women. Their place is not in the traditional role of an assistant to men. Unfortunately our Church is still hesitating to accept the leadership of women. They are welcome to the ministry as missionaries, teachers, nurses and to various other roles of serving the Church. The role of a servant seems to be more appropriate to her in the Church—to provide food at Church functions, to raise funds for the programmes and so on, but they should be far away from the decision-making organs of the Church. The Church has to accept that she is capable of independent thinking and judgement.

The Identity of Women: But are women capable? Is she equal to man? This question remains as long as she is denied

²⁰ Cf. Sheffield paper on—'Tradition and Traditions—a Chance for Renewal'.

her share simply on sexual grounds. Unless she is given a chance in responsible positions, she will not be able to prove her ability. The Church has reinforced women's lack of identity by its emphasis on the servant role of women, calling on women to sacrifice themselves in the worst sense, becoming nobodies. There is no basis for seeing woman's psychological nature as being so different from that of man's that it would be against nature for a woman to become a minister. A woman's experience of being a woman in a society not run by women, her struggle for the development of an identity of her own, could bring to her ministry an extra dimension, that of understanding, of solidarity with the underprivileged and of sacrifice. The Church would only benefit from this.²¹

It is the task of the Church to bring women the good news that they can have life if they have the courage to take it to the men, to give up their power and privilege to the Church that the Kingdom can be reborn as the new community where, with trust and tenderness and real sharing we enable ourselves and one another to discover our full humanity.²²

Woman has her own identity and role. To find her own identity she need not rebel against or imitate man. She has an equally important identity as that of man. Her's is not inferior or submissive. She is partner with equal responsibilities. Our task today is to help her to find her own identity and make her conscious of her responsibilities—in the Church and in the community.

Her role as an ordained minister today

Some Churches in the West and some in India especially the CNI and the Methodists accept women ministers in the Church. In most cases they are very well accepted. But very few have the opportunity to work as full-time pastors. The traditions and cultural background still keep the people from fully accepting the women ministers.

Many of them work in the women's auxiliaries or take up either children's work or some literary work. Some women work as

²¹ Cf. Henriette Santer, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

²² Cf. Marie Tully, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

secretaries or even as assistants to the Vicars. Exceptions do exist where the women take up the full responsibility of a parish as the Vicar.

The role expectation: But the role expectation and life style of a minister is highly demanding. A minister is expected to be totally dedicated and requires the supporting services of his/her partner as well. He/she should be ever-available. There is hardly place for a personal life, especially for a happy married life—but a minister should be able to respect, value and protect his/her personal life. This will enable him/her to understand his/her problems of his/her people.²³

Our task today: Now it is the mission of the Church to bring women back to her original divine purpose and role expectation. We have to fight against the evil forces, the superstitions and age-old traditions and conventions that prevent the children of God, the women, from exercising their role at all levels along with men, in order to contribute the total human response to God in the world. Today woman has surmounted most of the obstacles and has proved herself eligible and efficient to be an equal partner with man.

In India, almost a century ago, it was the influence of the highly enlightened missionaries, men and women, that encouraged the leaders of our nation to call forth the women of India to participate in the freedom struggle as well as to work for the emancipation and social uplift of women. The great woman like Sarojini Naidu, Captain Lakshmi of the I.N.A., Saroj Nalini Dutt, Pandit Ramabai, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Vijayalakshmi Pandit who challenged women to come out of their 'four walls' to play a dynamic role in the building up of the Nation, saying, 'woman should not restrict her life to the home and depend upon man to take important decisions about the world... Every woman is a creator in the ideals of Nationhood. I want the women of India to have consciousness of the great and dynamic nation whose energies have to be mobilized and harmonised for the common purposes'.²⁴ They called women to come out beyond the shelter of sex and share equally with men the perils and sacrifices

²³ Patricia B. Kepler, *Theology of Sexism and family* p. 86.

²⁴ Geraldine H. Forbes, *The Women's Movement in India*, p. 149f.

for liberation, not to break with tradition, but to follow the footsteps of women who lived in the 'radiant far off yesterdays of our history who had to "kindle and sustain the fires of the hearth and altar, to light the beacon lights" of liberation.'

Our women held such high visions in the past and worked for uplifting our people. Is this not the ministry of the Church, to uplift the downtrodden, to help the poor and heal the sick, to give meaning to the life of women, to give goal and purpose in life to our youngsters, to build Christian homes, to witness and cherish the gospel truths, to conscientise our people of the inherent corruption of our society? Was it not for this that God took flesh and lived among us?

It is our task today to bring man and woman together towards a fuller partnership to work hand in hand to attain this new humanity.

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THE RELIGIOUS RESOURCES OF THE DALITS¹ IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR STRUGGLE

(An overview of the Kerala Scene)

A. M. ABRAHAM AYROOKUZHIEL

Introduction

'Dalits are not Hindus', 'Dalits have a culture and religion of their own'. This renewed attempt after Ambedkar to dissociate themselves from brahminical Hinduism came from Dalit leaders who are genuinely anguished over the state of their community. In some instances the protest had taken the form of religious anger as the recent conversions to Islam show. But there is another more widespread tendency among the Dalits. This manifests itself in the form of a desire to reconstruct their own religious history from the ruins of the past ages. Dr. Kamble's reinterpretation of Ramayana, Sri T. A. P. Chentharassery's 'the Ignored documents of Kerala History' are just two examples which suggest that both religious and secular history as we have it tell the biased story of the victorious Aryan brahmins. The Dalits, the vanquished, have to rewrite history if they want to know their own religious and social past.

The mood of looking back to their own religio-cultural past had come over them as a result of their post-Independence experience. Two things did not happen in the independent India. Despite the religious idealism preached by the Hindu reformers like Vivekananda, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan in the pre-independent India, no religious integration took place within the Hindu religious community in the absence of any structural changes within it. On the contrary Hindu revivalism has taken the upper hand in the post independent India. The furthest they were prepared to go was to tolerate Dalit entry into their places of worship. But there it stopped. Secondly, the expected class consciousness does not

¹ The word 'Dalit' is the popular name Scheduled Castes have given themselves. It originated in Maharashtra and has been accepted by them all over India. In this paper 'Dalits' therefore mean Scheduled Castes.

at all seem to grow in our Caste ridden society. The Kerala Dalits, for instance, who once solidly stood for class parties are leaving them, completely disillusioned. The Dalit leaders this writer has interviewed, are confused. Some talked of a religious solution to their problems. Some write about their own socio-religious history as they think it is vital for the propelling of any forward movement in the community.

How much hope is there in religion for Dalits ?

This is something which depends on Dalits and their leaders. We cannot predict the future of this hope ; but we can look into the nature of possibilities and challenges their religious resources have for them. This is the purpose of this paper. It looks at the structure of their religion. Can their religion be an additional social instrument in their struggle ? What is the nature of their religious ideas, rituals and god-symbols ? We look at these things against the background of their religious history.

A. THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF DALIT RELIGION

1. *Brahminical religion and the captivity of Dalits in Kerala*

'From the age of the Sangam, when the earliest brahman settlement in Kerala was established, to the close of the eighth century when the land was almost covered with a network of brahman settlements, Kerala was a crucible of social transformation. The establishment of the first "Hindu" monarchy early in the ninth century was the culmination of the "Aryanising" forces, introduced through the agency of the brahman settlements, at work. Under the later Cerra Kingdom, the brahman settlements consolidated their position in this part of the country, so much so that the land was hailed to be brahmakshatra or the land of brahman rule created and donated to brahmans by Paraśurāma himself The brahmans, who had become the superior elements in society captured the apex of the feudal pyramid and they were thus able to dictate the pattern of socio-cultural developments in this part of the country'.²

² Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*, (historical studies) Sandhya Publications, Calicut University, 1978, Introduction, p. 10.

The process of economic and religious domination of the brahmins on the native population described above worked through the medium of 'a temple centred' village system. According to the historians,³ temple was the instrument through which they acquired control over large areas of land. The land was given to the temple to atone for the crimes in the war. After the conquest the land was offered to the temple and the King administered it as god's servant. The properties of Jains and Buddhists executed were transferred to temples. The peasants had gifted their land to temples to get protection from groups in conflict as well as to avoid paying tax to the State. Land was donated to temples as maintenance grants at the time of their establishment by feudal chiefs which over the period increased through gifts from devotees.

The brahmins who presided over this temple-centred social system excluded a section of the native population from their temples by the ideology of their *varnashrama dharma* and notions of ritual purity and pollution. Although they were excluded from the temple-centred social system by different degrees of 'untouchability', 'unapproachability' and 'unseeability' they all had to perform slave labour (*ūzhia vēla*) for the temples, for the feudal chiefs and for the state⁴ until it was abolished by law in 1855. Modern historical researches of Kerala history reveal that the Aryan brahmin domination of Kerala and the enslavement of the present-day Scheduled Castes went on simultaneously through a socio-economic-religious process. Brahmin religious myths and laws played the vital cultural role in this subjugation.⁵

³ Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Jenmi Systems in Kerala* (Malayalam) Kottayam. National Book Stall, 1966 and *Cila Kerala Caritra Prasnagal* (Kottayam) 1953, p. 295.

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⁴ N. K. Jose, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁵ Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, Forward to *Kerala Charitratile Avaganik-kapetta Edukal* by T. H. P. Chentharassery and Chentharassery's work itself.

N. K. Jose, *op. cit.*, pp. 94, 182.

K. Saradamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste*, 1980, pp. 26, 49.

2. *Alienation and Domination of the Dalit's places of worship continue*

There is another type of historical evidence not sufficiently explored which throws light on how, through religion, brahmins and high castes enslaved the Dalits. This is the fact that a number of important temples in Kerala which are now under the control of brahmins and high castes have 'rituals', 'gods', 'folk songs' and 'legends' connecting them with the Dalit castes.⁶ Through the centuries Dalits have kept their association with these places in one form or other. How these places of worship came under the control of the so called higher castes can only be discovered by painstaking research.

But the fact is that even in our own times Dalits continue to lose control over their places of worship. The nature of this process may throw some light on what possibly might have happened in the past. The process might not be the same but similar as the socio-political conditions in the past were different.

The results of an investigation the writer of this paper did in and around the district of Alleppey in Kerala is given below :

Generally speaking different caste groups in Kerala have their own temples. All the rich and important temples in the State are effectively under the administrative control of the higher castes, though technically some may fall under the Government Devaswam department and others under Nair Service Society. The backward class like Tiyyas, Izhavas have their own Guru Mandir or other traditional shrines. The Dalit castes like Pulayas, Sambavas (Parayas), Kuravas have their own places of worship. I have visited fifty-three shrines which in the respective localities are considered to be of Dalit castes. Of these fifty-three shrines Dalits have lost control either partially or completely in seventeen shrines. The process of this alienation takes different forms. When a Dalit shrine becomes popular and rich, and draws a crowd from

⁶ T. H. P. Chentaraserry, *Kerala Caritratille Avaganikkapetta Edukal*, pp. 171-76. *Cheranad Charitra Sakalanganal* pp. 14-24, 46-52.

Some of such temples are Padmanabha temple in Trivandrum Kodungalloor Bhagavati temple, Sabarimala, Otharamala, Mandakad, Parasala, Occhira, Kumaranalloor, Sastamkotta.

sections of different castes, non-Dalit castes get interested. They attempt to form a committee with support of some Dalits. It is challenged by the majority of the Dalits. The matter is taken to the civil court. The court decides in favour of a larger representative committee made up of different castes. The Dalit representation in the committee will be something like four in a total of twenty-four. The intercaste committee with the higher castes in key positions takes over the administration. They renew the shrine, introduce gods worshipped in other popular Hindu temples, invite a brahmin priest for the inauguration. The brahmin continues to come for the annual festival to do *puja* to those newly introduced gods. Later he comes for festivals like Sivaratri and the frequency increases and finally he becomes the *pujari* of the place. The Dalit who was the priest continues to do *puja* in the old shrine but he has a subordinate place in the new set-up. After his death no Dalit comes forward who is prepared to perform the traditional *chavutullal*. The ritual is discontinued as it is believed to be not in keeping with the modern times. In the process the Dalits lose their traditional priesthood and the consequent leadership role in the shrine and in their community. But a member of their community has to be present when traditional offerings of sacrificial cocks and goats are accepted from the people. He is also given the charge of looking after them until they are auctioned off by the new committee as the old custom of sacrificing them to the gods and ancestors is stopped. In the past the Dalits offered them at the shrine and had a community festival with dance and drink.

The process described could be slow or a chequered one. In one of the seventeen places after prolonged litigation with appeals to the higher courts, the court had finally placed a condition. The nature of the traditional rituals at the shrine should not be changed. The shrine should not be renovated changing its present character of a few stones, flags, sickles and arrows planted on open platforms. The right to perform the rituals would always belong to the traditional custodians of the shrine, namely Kuravas. All the same the new committee of twenty-four people in which only four are Kuravas decided to construct a 'brahmin shrine' outside the compound of the central shrine on an adjacent property newly acquired. Rites are performed there according to brahminical

tradition. The Kurava community lost one of its most sacred spots and they have shifted the centre of their community's religious life to the ancestral house of the chief priest which is situated near the old central shrine. The Kurava elders and the old chief priest are bitter but they are helpless.

Another mode of alienation would be if the land in which the shrine is situated is claimed to belong to some *Jenmi* of the upper caste.⁷ The landlord who had taken no interest in the religious practices at the shrine begins to exercise his rights over the land and shrine. In the process he may renew the shrine, invite brahmin priests to do *pūja* on certain occasions and form an inter-caste local committee to administer the shrine.

Of the three main Dalit castes in central Kerala region, the Kuravas have suffered most through alienation of their ancestral places of worship. Of the seven places of their worship I visited, six had gone into the control of the other castes. In one place as we have seen, they lost it after a long drawn out court case. The main reason for this is their social backwardness. There was no religious revolution among them as it happened among the Pulayās and the Sambavas.⁸ As a result they are incapable of organising themselves at the local level to form trusts or associations and register their shrines in the name of such associations. In the circumstances the All Kerala Siddhner Society which is a Kurava organisation remains a society which helps the few educated Kuravas to get jobs or scholarships.

In this respect the Pulayās and the Sambavas are in a better position. Eleven out of twenty-one Pulaya shrines I visited are registered with organisations such as Kerala Pulaya Maha Sabha, Kerala Cheramar Society, All Kerala Pulaya Maha Sabha. Among the Sambavas only four out of nineteen are registered with societies such as Kerala Hindu Sambava Maha Sabha, Kerala Hindu Sambava Sabha, Kerala Samabava Sabha. Some of the shrines among both these communities are registered under independent

⁷ The slavery which had started in the 8th and 9th centuries became very widespread and intensified by 18th and 19th centuries when the Dalit Castes were forbidden to own land or build any permanent structure in the way of a house or a shrine for themselves.

⁸ Cf. the section on religious ideas of Dalits.

local trusts. Of the twenty-one Pulaya shrines only three are likely to be lost to them. One as a result of the feudal hereditary right over the land in which the shrine is situated and the other two because of the economic aid received in recent times from the higher castes. At another two places, the Pulayas are fighting in the civil court, a high caste attempt to take over their shrine. Through one of these cases the high castes used the Government Devasom board to take over their shrine, which is now challenged in the court of law. Both parties separately conduct rituals in the disputed shrine. The problem of the other disputed shrine is that recently an Izhava got the land where the shrine is situated, registered in his name. The Pulayas believe that the land was given to them during the reign of King Marthanda Varma (1729-1758), free of tax.

Of the nineteen Sambava shrines three are in the process of being taken over by the higher castes. Of the four shrines belonging commonly to a number of Dalit castes, two are in the effective control of the higher castes. Of the two shrines which belong to *Tandans*, one is under the control of higher castes.

The Dalits would not have objected to this process of alienation; on the contrary they would have accepted it as a welcome form of religious integration if the temples and shrines of the higher castes permitted Dalit participation in their administration. But this is not the case. Very seldom does one find a Dalit in a higher caste temple committee. Even when he is there he does not represent Dalit interests. The only form of participation I found is that in some places they form separate festival committees with the sole aim of collecting funds. In these committees occasionally a Dalit is taken so that he can help with fund collection from Dalits.

Not only do Dalits have no voice in the control and administration of the rich and socially powerful temples of the higher castes, but the religious institutions like Devasom boards which control them are powerful instruments against the genuine-interests of the Dalits. A well-known example of such a situation is the fight the Devasom boards put up against land reform bills brought up by the State government which were largely meant to benefit the hutment rights of poor Dalit castes.⁹

⁹ M. A. Oommen, *op.cit.*, ch.4.

The Dalit castes also stand to lose their traditional priesthood and the leadership which is consequent upon it within their community as the higher castes are totally unwilling to accept them as priests in their temples. In 1976 when Mr. Prakulam Bhasi, an M.L.A. of the Revolutionary Socialist Party was the president of the Devasom Board, he got ten people belonging to backward classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes trained as temple priests at Ramakrishna Ashram, at Trichur and appointed them in Devasom temples as second grade priests. But soon they were promoted as second grade group officers and appointed in the administrative wing of the department. The background to this development was the feeling that if they continued as priests, the income of the temples would fall.¹⁰ In a study I did, in a panchayat near Cannanore, 95 % of the upper castes refused to accept Dalits as their priests.¹¹ The image of the Dalit among them is that he is impure.

It is not just the priesthood alone that the Dalits stand to lose in the process of the alienation of their shrines. Along with it they lose their sages, their martyrs and heroes who are worshipped in their shrines.¹² They have a ritual tradition of remembering their ancestors who tell the stories of their defeats and successes, agonies and joys. Discontinuity with this sacred history will further weaken the Dalit social struggle, as it will be difficult to build their community without those sacred memories. If the higher castes were able to accept their priesthood, their tradition of worship and their sages and heroes, a more meaningful integration would have been possible. The tradition-bound Hindu high caste religious leadership show no signs of such liturgical reform. In fact the *pujas* graded according to the money power of the devotees prevalent in Hindu high caste temples in Kerala further religiously humiliate the Dalits. The priesthood reserved to the brahmins perpetuate hierarchical caste consciousness among people. Added to this, in recent years, higher castes temples have become training camps for R.S.S. youths.

¹⁰ Information gathered from a Schedule Caste priest in the group.

¹¹ A. M. A. Ayrookuzhiel, *The Sacred in Popular Hinduism*, C.I.S.R.S., Bangalore.

¹² Cf. Section on religious ideas,

3. *A Positive Factor*

There is however a positive and brighter side in the present situation. Fifteen out of the fifty-three Dalit shrines are registered with Dalit organisations such as K.P.M.S., K.H.S.M.S. As we have seen above, the Pulayas are in the forefront with eleven out of twenty-one of their shrines registered with one of their community organisations. They are followed by Sambavas with four out of nineteen while none of the Kurava shrines are registered under a central organisation. This is an encouraging trend when we remember that in the 18th and 19th centuries Dalits were not allowed to build a permanent structure of their own and were religiously scattered under individual slave owners with very limited mobility. It looks now possible that after the example of S.N.D.P. which has united the backward class Izhavas under a central religious leadership, the Dalit organisations can unite their people under a central leadership through the network of their shrines. To start with different sub-Dalit groups can come under their respective organisations as it is happening now. At present Dalit organisations do not have religio-cultural dimension. Even their folk arts are performed under institutions which are under the control of higher castes. Religio-cultural dimension would strengthen the present Dalit organisations which are at present nothing more than social instruments for occasional agitations. If the present trend among the Pulayas and Sambavas spread and become strong a situation of 'many organised churches' within the Hindu community, similar to the Christian community may be the result. Such a situation has a future hope of real ecumenism and religious integration and will reverse the historical process of religious integration of the Dalits and the higher castes.

4. *Religious Movements among Dalits*

The study of the structure of Dalit religion would not be complete if we do not look into the religious movements among them. In the first half of this century there were two religious movements among Dalits in Kerala. One led by Poyyikayil Appachan now also known as Sri Kumara Guru Devan (1878-1938) and the other by Sri Subhananda Guru (1882-1949). Both were Dalits and brought out a religious revolution in Dalits' religious perceptions. Something of their teachings is given in next section. We are

here concerned about what happened to the movements. In general the upper castes looked upon them as 'paraya' movements though a very small number of upper castes either joined it or supported it. Both attracted the anger of the upper castes and had to face physical violence and threat to their lives.

But the real harm was done from within the movements. Already towards the end of their lives these *Gurus* were considered to be divine incarnations and *bhakti*, to them became the dominant note. At present stories and legends are made up to prove their divinity. The mystification of their origin and life completely blunted the historical struggle both undertook in their spiritual life as well as in that of their community. These *Gurus* are now objects of devotion and *bhakti*, not symbols of their community's struggle for emancipation from bondage. In the attempt to make them universal incarnations their followers forget the history of these great spiritual revolutionaries. In other words the movement has taken the classical Hindu tendency. A clear indication of this trend can be gathered from the type of hymns used now in both movements. The old hymns composed by the *Gurus* speaking of their low status, lamenting the condition of their community, condemning caste institution based on new religious perceptions and interpretations, celebrating their freedom from captivity, thanking God for liberating them are all removed from new editions of their hymn books. The new hymns used now are pure devotional songs extolling and praising *Guru's* divinity and exhorting spiritual virtues among their disciples.

In the case of one movement the leadership also had gone to non-Dalits. The present head of the movement, though a devout person, does not think the movement ever had such a mundane concern as the liberation of the Dalits. The movement's aim is the spiritual welfare of all people. Since he is a non-Dalit it now attracts more non-Dalits belonging to backward classes.

B. RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF THE DALITS

The religious ideas of the Dalits are made up of elements pertaining to the three strata of their history. They are the period before the enslavement, the period of enslavement and the modern

period beginning in the second half of the 19th century. The folk songs like *Bhadrakali pāṭṭu*, *Pākkanār pāṭṭu* belong to the earliest stratum. As these songs came down to us through oral tradition there are different versions and variations in language. The songs and gods in them are widely known as they were their possession before they were scattered and their mobility restricted during their captivity. This is in contrast to the second period, the gods of which are only locally known and worshipped.

Bhadrakālī pāṭṭu has a story similar to the story of the Tamil classic *Chilapatikaram*. The goddess in it is known as 'Bhadra' 'Māya Kālī Amman'. She is believed to be a goddess Dalits call upon to kill anyone who harm them (*Kollum Kolayum uḷḷa Daivam*). She is one who answers their call (*viḷichal viḷi keḷkunna Daivam*). It is their belief that the goddess should not be called upon to harm an innocent person.

Pākkanār pāṭṭu is the story of their origin. It starts with a creation myth and ends with the story of how they became Parayyas. They happened to eat by accident the roasted meat of a cow. In the beginning all were of one family. *Pākkanār* is their great ancestor. There are legends about him like '*Parachi petta pantiru kulam*'—the twelve sons of the Paraya woman now belonging to different castes. He is also associated with the celebration of Onam festival. He comes with the mythical king 'Maha bali' in whose reign there was 'no theft and no lie'. This noble king was cheated by Maha Vishnu and was sent to the nether world. *Pākkanār* comes with the King wearing marks of bow and arrow in his breast. Is it a myth and a ritual which explains the enslavement of the Dalits by the Aryan brahmins? Onam is most popular among lower castes and also the Nairs but not among the brahmins.

Legends and songs connecting Tamil classic writers such as 'Tiru Valluvar' and Avvayar to Dalits are also brought out recently by Dalit writers.¹³ There are also stories, songs connecting them with Buddhism. How much the religious ideas from these sources are part of their religious heritage is difficult to say.

¹³ T. H. P. Chentarasserry, *op. cit.*

The second stratum of religious ideas present among them are made up of songs and legends associated with particular shrines and the gods in them.

The following lines are taken from such 'a remembered story' associated with the worship at a Pulaya shrine near Kumbazha in Pathanamthitta district in Kerala. The family of the Dalit poet who wrote the poem, making himself the subject of the story, owned the shrine. He worshipped there with his family as a child.

Heaven and earth created God
O sun god I bow to you !
ready to die I stand O Malayālapuzhapōti
Your feet I hold and vow !

The truth of the matter take upon yourself
Thompikar today put me to death !
Even if years pass the truth
You prove, here I die.¹⁴

According to the story a young Pulaya was falsely accused of stealing a cow. Before he was put to death he prays to his God as quoted above. After his death great evils fall on the Thompikar family. They consulted the astrologer who tells them it was the curse of the Pulayan they had put to death. As a reparation the Thompikar family decided to give some paddy field and land to the family of the young Pulaya. They were asked to propitiate his spirit on behalf of Thompikar. This piece of land and paddy field known as the 'land of the murdered spirit' belongs to the family of the author of the poem.

Another old song is the lamentation of a young teenaged girl whose parents were thrown into the fire for going late to work. She stands by the side of the great fire into which her parents were thrown. She carries her baby brother on her shoulders and holds the hand of her younger brother. The song is addressed to the weeping little ones. As the girl sings, an eagle descends and

¹⁴ English translation of two verses from the Malayalam poem of K. K. Govindan's *Arukola Kandam*, 1982.

circles round them. A voice is heard 'O Children, the oppression you and your people endure will soon be remedied'.¹⁵

These types of songs and stories are frequently found connected with Dalit shrines. Of the 53 shrines I visited seven shrines have similar legends. In the Malabar region also one comes across similar shrines and songs. The *Tottam* of Neeli is an example.¹⁶ Basically these songs are the 'sighs of the oppressed'. But they express their faith that the crime will be punished. After the death of the victim, calamities fall on the evil doers in their story.

There are also songs about their heroes who defeated the higher castes in the encounter. Ittiyati, Chengannoor āti, Aikara Ytajanmanan are examples of such poems. One finds also songs like the *Tottam* of Pottan Teyyam in which Pottan, their god teaches equality of all men.

The third stratum is made up of the religious hymns and poems written in the first half of this century. The authors are all Dalits and people who brought out a religious revolution in the minds of the Dalits. It is not possible here to do anything more than mention some of the important names.

K. P. Karuppan's *Jati Kummi*, 142 stanzas, published in 1912 is a form of singing most familiar among the Dalit classes. The author begins his poem with the narration of an old story connected with the Dalit god called 'Pottan' in the Malabar region. It is a vehement indictment of brahminism and caste on the basis of Advaita philosophy. But some stanzas are closer to the spirit of Christianity, Islam and Bhakti tradition in India rather than to Advaita. For example I give here a translation of some verses.

This world of God's children
all are of one caste
Keeping away a fellow creature
Isn't God watching O Girl of spirituality
Untouchability, isn't it arrogance, O girl of wisdom
With pure thoughts
if the heart is adorned
whether a Valluvan or a Vellalan

¹⁵ K. M. Janardhanan, *Innalayude Pāṭham* in *Arukola Kandam*.

¹⁶ Chirakkal Balakrishnan Nair, *Kerala Bhāsha Gananga*, Song. No. 7.

acceptable is he to me O girl of spirituality
even the jungle man O girl of wisdom.¹⁷

Karuppan's work was a literary masterpiece and was sung by the Dalits all over the State in their traditional fashion. *Jati Kummi* is not made up of 'sighs and lamentations'. It is defiance and ridicule of the high castes. The presence of Christianity and the British, the poet makes full use of, to reveal the bankruptcy of the old religion.

Even the last born Paraya
if comes wearing a scapular
why not drive him out, Is't Scapular's merit
are you able to think O girl of spirituality
what blind beliefs O girl of wisdom.
Ramayana scholar a Tiyyan
To Raman way should he give
But a Thomas needn't bother
Great isn't it O girl of spirituality
Look the power of Rome O girl of wisdom.
Not the Pathans not to the Portuguese
This country's reign
To Britain had given God
Truly is He merciful O girl of spirituality
Now we are joyful O girl of wisdom.¹⁸

The poet goes on to say that Hindu religion still can be saved if the priests and the Kings want it.

Sri Poyykayil Appachan also known as Sri Kumara Guru Devan was another religious revolutionary. He became a Christian. But when he realized that the Christian Church in Kerala was equally infested with the caste mentality he founded his own Church. He sang: I see churches all over the place. There is Pulaya church, Paraya church, Syrian church, a fishermen's church; where is the church of my Christ? I am baptized in the blood of Christ; but even then my eternal pollution hasn't gone!¹⁹

¹⁷ K. P. Karuppan, *Jati Kummi*, vv. 13 and 43.

¹⁸ K. P. Karuppan, *op. cit.*, vv. 93, 95, 126.

¹⁹ This song is not publicly sung in P.R.D.S. the religious movement he founded. I have heard it sung by an old member and checked its veracity with others in P.R.D.S.

The songs he sang in the early period of his movement are rooted in a spirituality of liberation. I am not competent to translate the lyrical verses. A summary of the key ideas are given below :

‘ O Lord of truth who came to establish the truth, I remember you. Forget not O God these slave children to whom you have given the heavenly wisdom. You searched for us slaves. You destroyed the power of the evil one ; the Kingdoms are disappearing in quick succession. The frightened rulers are on the run ; where will they hide O God? All theologies are destroyed and the leaders have abandoned their seats of power. You destroyed the caste system O Lord ; you made the new order of one community. The slave people are on the return. Give us the rule of your Kingdom. Destroy our sins and unite us to the Eteral One. We wait upon you. You call us from everywhere ; brothers and sisters come.²⁰

Some of his hymns sound like Psalms of lamentation : ‘ I have examined the histories of Kerala. There is no word about my people. I see the histories of many peoples. Shame upon us. No one on earth is found to write stories of our people. We are a cursed people. Unashamed they shout everywhere. Until the heaven and earth pass away are we to be despised by everyone ! O God who formed the universe, how do you permit this even to this day ! ’²¹

There are hymns which celebrate their freedom from the bonds of caste and other teaching ‘ common judgement ’ for all people. The theme of God who comes like a mother seeking the slave, who loves the poor is frequent.²²

C. THE GOD-SYMBOLS AND RITUALS

Just as their religious ideas, the god-symbols and the ritual of Dalits are also composite in character. There are gods Bhadra, Marutha, Mallan, Mādan who are commonly found in their

²⁰ Song No. 33 in a hymn book found with an old member of P.R.D.S. in damaged condition.

²¹ P.R.D.S. hymn book, publ. 1977, hymn No. 6.

²² Ideas taken from hymns, 11, 15, 40, 47, 49, 58 from a Hymn book found with an old member, which is incomplete and damaged.

shrines. They are joined by another class of spirits known as Arukola, Pandarachavu. An Arukola is the spirit of a murdered man or woman. Arukola is frequently found in the shrines of Dalits, though a particular name is local with its own tragic story behind it. Generally they are Dalits murdered by the upper castes. In the fifty-three shrines studied by us seven have stories and the deified spirit of the murdered man of which five are Dalits and two are brahmins. In the case of the brahmin he had some contact, usually of a sexual nature, with a Dalit woman and was murdered by the higher castes or committed suicide himself. Arukola of brahmin is believed to have great powers.

Pandarachavu is the spirit of a great ancestor who died of small-pox. Both the above classes of gods and spirits are worshipped with cock sacrifice and offerings of alcoholic spirits. The ritual is called *chavutullal* (dance bringing down the dead spirit).

The third group is made of people believed to be great ancestors, teachers and leaders. Names such as Nandanar, Pākkanār, Aikara, Yajamanan, Ittiyati, Chengannoor Āti belong to this class. In this context special mention should be made of the worship of Duryodhana brothers found in some of the Dalit shrines, particularly of the Kuravas.²³

In the recent past Dalits have introduced gods of the brahminical tradition in some of their shrines. They are worshipped with flowers and lamps without the use of *mantrams* and other elaborate rituals found in the brahmin tradition. On the other side their traditional ritual of *chavutullal* is becoming increasingly discontinued.

The followers of Kumara Guru Devan and Subhananda Guru worship these Gurus as divine incarnations. But no ritual is performed. The worship consists of singing devotional hymns and offering of flowers and lamps.

Conclusion

The Dalit's religion is structurally dependent. It exists generally speaking within the macro-structure of the religion of the

²³ 'Duryodhana cult is prevalent among tribals of Bihar and Orissa' *Indian Express*, Bangalore, Monday, November 8, 1982. P.T.I. The report is about a Duryodhana temple in Maharashtra.

higher castes, which works against the interests of the Dalits. All the same there is a trend among the more awakened sections of the Dalits to make their religion organisationally independent. If this is pursued with vigour and imagination it can help them as a source of power in their social struggle.

The other problem is the composite character of the rituals and religious ideas. They are not a coherent group of ideas around a group of core symbols. At one level Dalits have the most revolutionary religious concepts. On the other side they have a strong tradition of magical beliefs. When it comes to worship, it is the magical beliefs and forms of worship which dominate the scene. Both Kumara Guru Devan and Subhananda Guru have brought the history of Dalits into the heart of worship. Their concept of God, particularly that of Kumara Guru Devan, was that of a loving father, active in history, for the liberation of his people. Unfortunately this lead was not followed. Their communities in their anxiety to make them divine have again slipped into the Indian cultural temptation dehistoricising those lives and the liberating spirituality they initiated. The present Dalit intellectual leadership has no religious authority. But the institutional autonomy the Dalit religion has been gaining in a small measure, they should make use of and strengthen. Some of the Dalit religious symbols like Nandanar, Pakkanar, Duryodhana have certainly spread across the States among the Dalit castes which could be made use of to forge links among them. To these must be added names of Gurus and poets such as Kumara Guru Devan, Subhananda Ayyaswami, Karuppan whose counterparts are sure to be found in other regions among the Dalits. A Dalit religion around Dalit history is not an impossible concept.

THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS

(*A Study of Muslim-Christian relations in the early
19th century India*)

MUSHIR-UL-HAQ

The Christian East India Company with its headquarters at Calcutta had not yet made its existence fully felt in and around Delhi when the people there were witnessing the rise of the Marhattas as a great power, and the corresponding decline of the Mughal glory. After the battle of Plassey between the Mughals and the East India Company in 1757, Delhi had not only fallen prey to Marhatta ambitions it had also become a target for every adventurer. During the last quarter of the 18th century the inhabitants of Delhi lived in an almost constant state of horror, threatened each year by raids from the Marhattas to their south, and the Sikhs to their north. A glimpse of the incredible misery which the people of Delhi were experiencing from periodical Sikh/Marhatta raids can be seen in some of the verified personal letters¹ of a Muslim theologian, Shah Abdul-Aziz (1746-1824) which he had written to his uncle, Shah Ahlullah (d. 1772). Shah Abdul-Aziz—the famous son of Shah Waliullah—who is still regarded as one of the greatest *Ulema* of India was then hardly twenty when he wrote those letters. In one of them he says :

The powerful infidels
Have wrought ruin from Kabul to Delhi.
May God retaliate on our behalf
Upon the Sikhs and the Marhattas—
The worst retaliation, now, without delay.
Many people they have killed,
And reduced many to misery.
None is safe from their hands,
When their army, equipped with bows and arrows, attacks.

¹ For the Arabic text of these letters Cf. Muhammad Rahim Bakhsh Dihlawi, *Hayat-i Wali* (Delhi, 1319/1901, pp. 328, 333-336; Reprint, Lahore, n.d., pp. 601, 602, 609, 611-13.) The English rendering is by the present author.

Each year they raid our city
 And disturb our peaceful life.
 The city is a ruin,
 Sans of peace and tranquility.
 In despair people ask,
 'Is there any protector for those who seek protection?
 And is there any God-fearing and just helper?'

In another of these letters Shah Abdul-Aziz says :
 Winter is approaching,
 Hearts are filled with fear of the Sikhs,
 And the fear is not baseless, indeed.
 May God oust them from our city,
 They are barbarians and worst of enemies.
 We surrender our affairs unto God,
 And pray for His protection.

The third letter describes the situation in Delhi :
 The invaders and barbarians have sacked the city,
 Aware you are of what Sikhs have done to us :
 They have cut us into pieces ;
 Have destroyed every town ;
 Have seized forts and ridges.
 They caught the people and slaughtered them,
 Looted their goods and plundered their women.
 If anyone came forth to check them
 He was forced to drink the cup of death.

The state of affairs was dreadful, indeed,
 Mothers ran away leaving their babies.
 Indeed the situation is horrifying,
 Wise people should learn a lesson from it.
 Look, how the common people,
 Like weavers and sweepers,
 Have become the master of the land.
 Only to God do I complain against them.
 (Certainly glory and honour are only to God.)
 That's how the raiders have advanced
 Further and further, day by day,
 And have fully ruined the Muslims.

In these terrifying circumstances the Muslim leaders offered little help to their people :

Though among Muslims there are great and wise people,
 Yet they have no courage at all.
 When people approach them
 They first order action
 And then sit to confer.
 They are fickle-minded,
 And easily surrender to their fate.
 Nor they try to push the enemy back,
 Nor they like to be censured.
 This is their condition, such as never was before,
 Nor ever dreamt of.
 If someone complains to them against the enemies,
 They try to silence him with their sharp tongues.

Meanwhile the British, who had long since established themselves in the East, were encroaching northward.

And the European Christians are also coming.
 They are said to be honest in their words and deeds.
 They collect revenue, with justice,
 In the name of him who is called *imam*. (the master)
 They wish to take over the country
 From him who is the master of the people and the land.
 They want to wrench property
 From those who owned them.
 Their power is beyond imagination,
 Their *modus operandi* defies conjecture.

II

Many Muslims of the subcontinent, when they study the British period of Indian history, overlook an important point. They tend to think that the British arrived here with a calculated plan to spread Christianity. It is naturally then assumed that the Indian *Ulema* at once recognized and opposed this threat. They, however, ignore the fact that the militant zeal of the Marhattas and the Sikh was, then, a far more immediate threat than the calculated tolerant indifference of the East India Company.

In the period under study the British of the East India Company appear to have been less interested in spreading the message of the Christ compared to their own trades and commerce. Spreading of the message was, then, regarded the sole responsibility of the missionaries, and the Company did its utmost to keep them from setting foot on Indian soil. Missionaries were forbidden to enter India without obtaining a licence from the Company: few such licences were issued. Most of the Mission people who managed to come here entered the country without permission.

The Charter of 1698 demanded of the East India Company that every ship of 500 tons load bound to India must carry in it a chaplain. In order to escape providing the statutory chaplain the Director of the Company carefully sent out for sixty years, ships of only 499 tons.² The Company's attitude towards the missionaries was so disparaging that protests were made to Archbishop Wake (of Canterbury), which ultimately led to a change.³ Back at home, in London, however, the missionaries were gradually gaining popular support which helped them strengthen their position against the monopolist Company. It is believed that 'a great body of religious people throughout the island was already prepared to lead the attack on the renewal of the Charter if they believed the Company to be hostile to the principle of introducing Christianity into India.'⁴ This continued till as late as 1833 when the missionaries were officially exempted from obtaining a licence from the Company for coming to India.⁵

The hostility on the part of the East India Company may have stemmed from the fear that the missionaries would antagonize both Muslims and Hindus of India and thus damage its commercial interests. Or it may simply have reflected the lack of religious conviction of the Englishmen stationed in India. The British employees of the Company, at that time, were known for their negligence towards their religion. It is reported that 'the Indians considered all Europeans in general and the English in particular

² Penny, *Church in Madras*, I, 346, as quoted in Percival Spear, *The Nabobs*, Oxford, 1963, p. 106.

³ P. Spear, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁴ Kenneth Ingham, *Reformers in India, 1793-1833*, Cambridge, 1956, p. 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

to be winebibbers.⁶ The English civilians in India also were disappointed with the religious life of the Company's officials. In 1781 one Mrs. Fay wrote from Calcutta to her people in England in one of her *Letters from India* (1779-1815), 'I have never mentioned yet how indifferently we are provided with respect to place of worship; divine service being performed in a room (not a very large one) at the Old Fort; which is a great disgrace to the settlement. They talk of building a church and have fixed on a very eligible spot whereon to erect it but no further progress has been made in the business.'⁷

The apprehension of the Company against the priestly class, however, was not quite baseless. More often they turned their back upon the religious sentiments of the Indians. From the Company's papers it appears that 'a mutiny amongst some of the Company's sepoys at Vellore was widely attributed to attacks upon the Hindu religion. Fortunately the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, Edward Perry and Charles Grant, both evangelicals, were able to write a convincing refutation of the missionaries' culpability in a letter to the President of the Board of Control. Largely as a result of these two men's effort to influence the debates in the Court the Directors eventually accepted the view that the unconscious behaviour of the military commander and the failure of the Governor to check him were the fundamental causes of the disaster.'⁸ Minto after becoming the Governor General of India (1807-1813) 'imposed severe restrictions upon the Baptist Mission Press at Serampore from which, unknown to the missionaries, there had recently been issued a number of violent attacks upon Islam and Hinduism.'⁹ For his hostile attitude to the missionaries Lord Minto was bitterly criticised at home. He then adopted a liberal attitude towards them and 'finally took upon himself the

⁶ Perceival Spear, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁷ Hilton Brown, *The Sahibs: The Life and Ways of the British in India*, London, 1948, p. 64.

⁸ Commonwealth Relations Office, *Mss. Court Minutes*, V, 118, fols. 572-577, as quoted in Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 7. According to Ingham (*ibid.*) the letters referred to in text, dated 8 June, 1807, are preserved in the Bodleian Library, *Mss. Correspondence on Mission in India*, 1807.

⁹ Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

responsibility of permitting two Baptist missionaries to proceed to Agra and Delhi.¹⁰

There had been Roman Catholic missions in North India as early as the sixteenth century, but, in fact, by the eighteenth century those were no longer effective. For the first time after the Roman Catholic missions a Baptist Missionary Society was started at Agra in 1811. In Delhi there were no mission office till 1817.¹¹ The evidences also indicate that in the north until as late as 1830 the missionaries' activities were not believed to be hostile, and no clashes on religious ground were reported between the Muslims and the Christians, not even on the question of conversion. One Shaikh Saleh (d. 1827) from Agra (known afterwards as the Rev. Abdul-Masih) was baptized in Calcutta in 1811, and had soon become the first Indian representative of the Church Missionary Society. He worked hard and in less than sixteen months he converted not less than fifty Hindus and Muslims to the religion of the Christ.¹² But the Muslim sources hardly show any sign of alarm over the conversion of either Shaikh Saleh himself or those of others. It is well to remember, however, that the Muslims during the period of their rule in India usually remained indifferent on the question of individual conversion. They indeed took note of such activities when it became a political threat to them or when they found people openly abusing the authority of the Quran or attacking the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. In 1833 the Rev. Pfander (of Agra) wrote in Persian his controversial book, *Mizan al-Haqq*, attacking the Quran and the Prophet,¹³ which was followed by a series of publications written with almost the same motive. This provoked the Muslims and a chain of unhealthy religious debates was started. Before that we do not find the Muslims and the Christians publicly debating with each other on religious issues. The open public debate was held for the first time in 1844 between Maulana Ali-Hasan and Rev. Pfander.¹⁴

There are no contemporary evidences available to support such stories current among the Muslims that the Christo-Muslim

¹⁰ Lord Minto in India, 81, as quoted in Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹¹ For Christian Mission Stations in India (1793-1813) see Ingham, *op. cit.*, Appendix C, p. 133 ff.

¹² Imdad Sabiri, *Farangiyon ka Jaal*, Delhi, 1949, p. 50.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

polemics had become the fashion of the day as early as the time of Shah Abdul-Aziz (d. 1824) who 'considering it an Islamic duty took part in them in full swing.'¹⁵ True that in *Kamalat-i-Azizi*,¹⁶ a treatise recording the marvels of Shah Abdul-Aziz, we do find some stories in which Christian missionaries are presented discussing and debating religious issues with Shah Abdul-Aziz, but on close scrutiny they lose their seriousness. For example it is reported that once a padre came to Charles Metcalfe, the Company representative in Delhi, and requested him to arrange a debate between him and one of the prominent Muslim theologians. Metcalfe agreed to take him to Shah Abdul-Aziz on the condition that the padre would pay to Metcalfe a sum of rupees two thousand if he lost the debate. In case the padre won the debate Metcalf would pay him the equal amount. Then after they went to Shah Abdul-Aziz. The padre asked him to answer a question on the ground of reason and logic only without invoking the scriptural authorities. The question was : If Prophet Muhammad was the true prophet of God, as the Muslims believe, then why did God not save his beloved grandson, Husain, from the hands of those who killed him at Karbala ! Why did the Prophet not seek the help of the God and save his grandson ? Shah Abdul-Aziz said that the Prophet indeed approached God for help but was told that how could God save his grandson when He Himself had failed in saving His own son from crucifixion. This answer is said to have silenced the padre who, according to the story, paid the stipulated amount to Metcalfe.¹⁷

This and other similar stories current among the Muslims prove our point that the religious debates in their real sense had not yet started. It is true that the Christians used to come to Shah Abdul-Aziz but that was mainly for knowing more about Islam and the Islamic way of life than for engaging him in polemics. As a matter of fact some British officers who frequently called upon him were suspected by their fellow officers as having crossed over to his faith. Thus Col. James Skinner, nicknamed as Sikandar Sahib,

¹⁵ Muhammad Ali Lutfi in his Preface to his Urdu translation of Persian *Malfuzat-i-Azizi*, Karachi, 1960, p. 19.

¹⁶ *Kamalat-i-Azizi* was compiled by one Nawwab Mubarak Ali Khan, and was first published from Meerut in 1873. It has been published as an Appendix of the Urdu translation of the *Malfuzat*, Karachi, 1960.

¹⁷ *Kamalat-i-Azizi*, Karachi, 1960, p. 225 ff.

was one who is reported to have developed in him 'a symptom of fondness for Islam.'¹⁸ There were others like him. For example, the British Resident of Delhi (supposedly Alexander Seton) was so close to him that, according to a report, had once presented to him some money for buying books for his personal library.¹⁹ In *Malfuzat-i-Azizi*, his *obiter dicta*, compiled by one of his unnamed disciples, Shah Abdul-Aziz has mentioned as his friends three British officers, Col. James Skinner, William Fraser and Alexander Seton. The way he has spoken of them indicates that he knew them rather intimately. About Skinner he says that he was a friend but was temperamentally rude,²⁰ Seton was a learned friend, but violent and a flatterer. Fraser was indeed a gentleman, a knowledgeable and intelligent friend and had also been consulting him on academic issues.²¹ If we study the life style of these three Englishmen we will then see how closely Shah Abdul-Aziz had observed them. Skinner was an Eurasian from the side of his Hindu mother, and was himself married to a Hindu Rajput girl. He was a victim of 'gradual supersession',²² believably because of his family background, which had made him bitter against other British officers. A contemporary Muslim employee of the East India Company, Molvi Abdul-Qadir Rampuri, says in his memoirs that Seton and General Ochterlony had always one complaint or the other against him.²³ Alexander Seton, the British Resident at Delhi, is described by his biographer as being 'too gentle with the Mughal Emperor, and inefficient in his administration.'²⁴ At a time when the East India Company had virtually reduced the

¹⁸ Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, Cambridge, 1951, p. 149.

¹⁹ Cf. Fazl-i-Husain Bihari, *Al-Hayat ba'd al-mamat* (an Urdu biography of Maulana Nazir Hussain alias Miyan Sahib, 1805-1902) Karachi, 1959, p. 102.

²⁰ Shah Abdul-Aziz has used the word *jahil*, which does not always mean 'ignorant' or 'illiterate'. Sometimes the same word *jahil* is used for a rustic, rugged and rude person. Skinner was certainly not an illiterate, but rude indeed he was.

²¹ *Malfuzat-i-Azizi* (Persian, Meerut, 1896, p.117; Urdu translation Karachi, 1960, pp. 214, 215). Also cf. *Fatawa Azizi*.

²² Baillie Fraser, *Military Memoirs of Col. James Skinner*, ii, 159, quoted in P. Spear, *The Nabobs*, p. 13.

²³ Abdul Quadir Rampuri, *Waq'a'i Abdal-Qadir Khani* (Persian, unpublished) cf. its Urdu translation, *Ilm-o-Amal* by Mu'in-uddin Afzalgarhi, Karachi, 1960, i, p. 193.

²⁴ Phillip Woodruff, *The Men who ruled India: The Founders*, London, reprint, 1954, p. 268.

Mughal Emperor almost to its dependent the careful expression of 'too gentle' would perhaps have the same import which Shah Abdul-Aziz wanted to convey with the word flatterer. William Fraser was an exception. With many prominent Indian nobles and men of letters he had established close relations. According to Percival Spear, 'his brother officers did not like his friendliness to the Delhi families'²⁵. One of his friends, Victor de Jacquemont, a French traveller, writes about him : 'He is half Asiatic in his habits, and is the only officer of government, who, to my knowledge, keeps up any social relations with natives. Last Sunday I paid a few visits with him to some of these long beards (Mussulmauns). This politeness and condescension is, I fancy, blamed by other British officers.'²⁶ Abdul-Qadir Rampuri who served for a considerable time under several British officers attributes to him the quality of 'quick conception and deep knowledge.'²⁷

III

During the period under study the Muslims generally did not see the Christians as a potential threat to their religion. For centuries they were living with people of other faith and were used to coexisting with them. The East India Company also was not yet regarded as representative of Christianity. It was mainly seen as a foreign power whose administration compared to that of the Indians' was rather preferable. The missionaries who might have made trouble were, we have seen, excluded or, at least, controlled by the Company. In the course of time, however, the policy of the Directors of the Company changed partly in response to pressure at home, and partly as a result of growing recognition for the missionaries' work in the field of education and social services. In 1833, when the Charter was renewed, the Company lost, as we have seen, its power of licensing the missionaries. Freed

²⁵ Percival Spear, *The Nabobs*, p. 93. (It is said that Fraser ultimately met his death mainly because of this very friendliness. For an account of his murder see, P. Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, Cambridge, 1951, pp. 182-193 ; W. H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, London, 1844, ii, 209-231. For the Indian viewpoint on his murder, cf. Malik Ram, *Zikr-i Ghalib*, Delhi, 1955, p. 69 ff.

²⁶ de Jacquemont, *Letters from India*, London, 1835, p. 259.

²⁷ Abdul-Qadir Rampuri, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

from this restriction they began to enter the country in numbers and soon embarked on a programme of mass conversion which antagonized the Muslims and the Hindus alike. Indeed, the early years of 1800s were a watershed in relations between the Muslims and the Christians. For, it was in this period that the East India Company dropped all pretensions of acting only as the agent of the Mughal Emperor, and emerged as the real political power. In January 1815 the English Governor-General, Lord Moira, made a tour of inspection of the area under the control of the Company. While passing by Delhi he was expected to make a courtesy call at the court of the Mughal Emperor, who by then had started living on pensions granted by the Company. The visit did not materialize because the Emperor is reported to have refused to provide a chair for Lord Moira to sit with the Emperor in the court. He wanted him to pay the homage to him standing on his feet as other *subedars* (tributaries) were expected to do. That was in fact a matter of political ethics. Akbar Shah II, a pensioner indeed, was the *de jure* King of India whereas Lord Moira, according to the Emperor's understanding, was only an agent of the East India Company to which the Emperor had leased a portion of his territory. But this royal logic was unacceptable to Lord Moira who considered himself the representative of the British Crown which had graciously allowed the Mughal Emperor to live in Delhi on a fixed pension. So that was that; but the aforementioned Molvi Abdul-Qadir Rampuri who was accompanying Lord Moira in his tour saw the matter purely from an ethical point of view. In his memoirs referring to the incident he criticises the Emperor for not obliging Lord Moira by providing a chair in the court. That would not have made any difference to the position of the Governor-General, but that could certainly have enhanced the honour of the King, he thinks.²⁸ Further squabbling about the incident, however, is now meaningless: we have mentioned it here chiefly to show how the Company had gradually started asserting its position. It now felt strong enough to strike its own coins without the Mughal Emperor's name on it, and the year 1835 also saw the Company's decision to replace Persian with English

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

as the language of the court.²⁹ This must have come as a shock to many people who were forced to realize for the first time that far from being only a trader and an agent of the Mughal Emperor, the Company had in fact become the virtual ruler of the country. This coupled with the proselytizing activities of the missionaries who were now feeling free after the restrictions on their movement were removed, must have alarmed especially the Muslims.

IV

Commenting on the missionaries efforts for increasing the number of the converts, Molvi Abdul-Qadir Rampuri, after giving the antecedents of certain Muslim converts to Christianity, concludes that in many cases people got themselves converted mainly for wordly gains. Further, he says : 'In my opinion an honest seeker of the Truth does not have to present himself before the Caliph of Ottoman Empire for becoming a Muslim, nor does he have to go to the King of London for entering into the Christian fold, or to the Rana of Udaipur for becoming a Hindu. Religion is the matter of heart, and one should be firm in his conviction which he regards best. Conversion is a business which assures only bread and butter. People usually do not let themselves be converted because of God-given inner conviction. (I just do not understand) why are these Mullas and the Pundits and the Padres eager to show to their co-religionists the list of the names of the new converts. God does know everything ; if people are not told of the number of the converts the heaven will not fall.'³⁰ But that was not the way the Church-oriented missionaries liked to think. For them the reporting of number was more important.

Had the missionaries without indulging in the affairs of proselytization concentrated on making the message of Christ known to the people through positive means of educating them the outcome would, one feels, have been greater and perhaps more lasting. In the beginning they did establish schools and hospitals which

²⁹ Cf. Abul-Kalam Azad, '1857 : The Need for a New Evaluation (Presidential Address at the 31st Session of the Indian Historical Research Commission, Mysore, 1955) in *Speeches of Maulana Azad, 1947-1955*, Delhi, 1956, p. 329.

³⁰ Abdul-Qadir Rampuri, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

won the sympathy of the local people, but soon such missionary institutions came to be regarded as a trap for catch. In the beginning the Muslims were not so suspicious of the mission schools, which would have stopped them from sending their children to them. For example, 'the register of the boys in the free school at Benaras, where no distinctions were permitted, contains the names of 142 pupils admitted between June 1824 and May 1833, and includes representatives of innumerable castes ranging from Brahmins to Sudras, Christians and Muhammadans'.³¹

Inclination towards new learning in Muslim quarters was seen even before Warren Hastings 'roused by a petition from a considerable number of respectable Muhammadans, had founded a Madrasa, or college, in Calcutta, in 1781'.³² A decade later, in 1792, the Oriental College of Delhi (now known as Delhi College) was founded, and in 1825 a new English class was started in it.³³ In the beginning the Muslims of Delhi suspected the policy of introducing English language in Delhi College, but very soon they realized that their suspicion was not really based on any solid ground. Within three years, therefore, the number of the boys who were admitted to the English class is said to have reached three hundred.³⁴ How many of them were Muslims is hard to tell because no break up is available.³⁵ However the Muslims not only participated in the affairs of the College as students but also took keen interest in various capacities for its advancement. A wealthy Muslim endowed a handsome amount to run the college, and the Muslim theologians accepted teaching positions under the principalship of Englishmen. Maulana Mamluk Ali, for example, was the Head of the Arabic section of the College. His pupil, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanawtawi (one of the founders of the Darul-ulum of Deoband) was also, for a brief period though, on the staff

³¹ Church Mission Society, *Ecclesiastical Papers*, Mss. Package 156, North India, quoted by Ingham, *Reformers in India*, p. 25.

³² Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

³³ Abdul-Haqq, *Marhum Dilli College*, Aurangabad, 1933, p. 2.

³⁴ C. F. Andrews, *Zakaullah of Delhi*, Cambridge, 1929, p. 34.

³⁵ According to Abdul-Haqq (*op. cit.*, p. 11) this 300 was the total strength of the college, not of the English class only.

³⁶ Abdul-Haqq, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

of the college.³⁷ Similarly, another *alim* of the city, Mufti Sadruddin Azurdah, was on the panel of the examiners of the College.

In the perspective of what we have so far seen it appears that the Christo-Muslim relations in India have quite often been in the state of oscillation. There was a time when the Jesuit priests made their debut at the court of the great Mughal Akbar and were welcomed there.³⁸ Later when the Mughals lost their political supremacy and the East India Company succeeded in making its existence felt on the scene as the future master of the land, a turn came in the Muslim-Christian relations. The missionaries no longer felt the need of carrying the begging bowls in their hands. They were now themselves in the position of giving things. As long as the Company, purely for its commercial considerations, was able to control the proselytizing zeal of the missionaries all went well. So long as the *status quo* was maintained Muslims did not show any sign of resentment against the Christians: they certainly became restive when they realized that the power-to-be was no longer interested in meeting with them only on a social plane. They were rather required to undergo the official programme of Christianization. And thus was upset the apple-cart.

³⁷ Rahman Ali, *Tazkirah Ulama-i-Hind* (Persian, 2nd ed., Lucknow, 1914, p.210). Urdu translation by Muhammad Ayyub Qadiri, Karachi, 1961, p. 456: also see Imdad Sabiri, *Farangiyan ka Jaal*, Delhi, 1949, p. 266.

³⁸ For a recent Study of the Jesuit Mission to Akbar, cf. C. W. Troll (ed), *Islam in India Studies and Commentaries*, i, pp. 3-29.

THE LADDER AND THE CROSS : SYMBOLS OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE INTEGRAL VEDANTA OF ŚRĪ AUROBINDO

NALINI DEVDAS

In his epic-poem *Savitri*, Śrī Aurobindo writes :

The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,
One who is in us as our secret self,
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,
He has made this tenement of flesh his own
His image in the human measure cast
That to his divine measure we might rise ;
Then in a figure of divinity
The Maker shall recast us and impose
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould
Lifting our minds to his infinite,
Touching the moment with eternity.
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven :
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme :
His nature we must put on as he put ours
We are sons of God and must be even as he :
His human portion, we must grow divine
Our life is a paradox with God for key.¹

The Liturgy of the Eucharist of the Catholic Church says :

By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to
share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share
in our humanity.

The concept of integrality is central to the philosophy of
Śrī Aurobindo and the goal of his yoga is the harmony and fulfil-
ment of all aspects of life. For him the ladder and the cross are
symbols of transformation.

Note.—All works referred to in the footnotes are by Śrī Aurobindo unless
specified otherwise.

¹ *Savitri*, Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972, p. 67.

In order to sketch the comprehensive and many-dimensioned character of Śrī Aurobindo's thought, this study is divided into four sections.

The first section presents Śrī Aurobindo's interpretation of non-duality. In his view :

The Supreme Reality is an Absolute not limited either by oneness or multiplicity but simultaneously capable of both ; for both are its aspects, although the oneness is fundamental and the multiplicity depends upon the oneness.²

This interpretation of non-duality makes it possible for him to posit three integrating principles in his system : a dynamic consciousness-force as an inseparable aspect of the Absolute ; a mediating principle, the Supermind, as the 'link' between the Eternal One and the finite many ; and the psychic entity or Soul as the Divine emanation immanent within finite life.

The second section deals with the symbol of the ladder and the themes of 'ascent' and 'descent' in Śrī Aurobindo's works. For him the great ladder of being, with its infinite gradations which allow no chasms or gulfs, is a symbol of dynamic power. It is like an escalator with the wondrous power to move upwards and downwards simultaneously. The lower planes are constantly transformed and carried into the life of the higher ; the energies of the higher planes are constantly 'brought down' to transform the lower.

The third section presents the cross as Śrī Aurobindo's symbol of Divine self-limitation and 'descent' into the pain of finite existence. The purpose of the descent is transformation and integration which is also embraced by the symbolism of the cross. The 'vertical' of the cross symbolizes the ladder of being from whose heights the Divine Consciousness-force descends in order to manifest and establish the 'horizontal' of matter, life and mind. In the evolutionary ascent towards the heights of the vertical, the horizontals are not denied or destroyed but affirmed and transfigured.

² *Ōn Yoga II, Tome One*, Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1947, p. 45.

The fourth section is concerned with the process of transformation in the integral yoga of Śrī Aurobindo. In this yoga there can be no transformation without acceptance of the cross of pain ; but, equally, there can be no transformation if the disciple clings to the pain and becomes a man of sorrows.³ The cross of pain must be transformed into the ladder of ascent in the disciple's life.

The symbols of the ladder and the cross appear in the myths and rituals of many cultures, ancient and modern. In two of his works, *Images and Symbols* and *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircea Eliade seeks to establish that there are coherent underlying patterns in the symbolisms and mythologies of disparate places and times.

Eliade draws upon the findings of modern psychoanalysts to support his thesis that the symbols through which ancient peoples approached and dealt with their world are very similar to the symbols which today inform our literatures and mould our dreams. According to Eliade, in the psychoanalytic literature of our times as well as in ancient mythologies the ladder and the cross are associated with themes of ascent, descent, and integration. The ladder is typically the 'link' between heaven and earth.

In his discussion of the use of symbols in the Christian tradition Eliade states :

The Christian may well be a man who has ceased to look for his spiritual salvation in myths and in the experience of immanent archetypes alone ; he has not, for all that, abandoned all that the myths and symbolisms mean and do to the psychic man, to the microcosm.⁴

According to Eliade, the cross as a symbol embraces the richness of meaning present in the archetypal image of the cosmic tree which is a figure of inclusion and integration. He quotes the words of the pseudo-Chrysostom who describes the Cross of Christ as a tree which

... rises from the earth to the heavens. A plant immortal, it stands at the centre of heaven and earth ; strong pillar

³ Savitri, *op. cit.*, pp. 505-506.

⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, New York, 1969, pp. 160-61.

of the universe, bond of all things, support of all the inhabited earth ; cosmic interlacement, comprising in itself the whole medley of human nature.⁵

According to Eliade, the ladder, the cross, the *axis mundi* and the world tree are symbols which traverse and "rupture" the cosmic planes. They are the pathways on which, in life or in death, the soul can pass from the limits of temporal existence to boundless eternity.

The presence of archetypal images in Śrī Aurobindo's writings links his philosophy with the psychological roots of all cultures. However, it is to be noted that Eliade finds the common pattern underlying these symbols in the experience of *coincidentia oppositorum*—'the paradoxical situation attained by the abolition of the "pairs of opposites"'⁶ whereas, the central affirmation in Śrī Aurobindo's integral yoga is exactly that the dynamic interplay of opposites is not ultimately eliminated but that only the disharmony is removed. At each stage of the psychic journey the polarities of existence, such as consciousness and matter, individual and totality, are integrated and transformed so that they exist according to their unique and authentic natures.

The cross and the ladder are embraced in Śrī Aurobindo's emblem of two interlinked triangles, one with its apex at the top and the other with its apex at the bottom. In the space enclosed by them a lotus blooms in quiet waters. The triangles symbolize the potential energies rising from below and the transforming energies descending from above. The twofold energies meet in the horizontal space where the world-lotus blooms, nourished by them. Its myriad lovely petals are all in place, all perfected in the light of the Divine Sun.

Brahman is integral and unifies many states of consciousness at a time ; we also, manifesting the nature of Brahman, should become integral and all-embracing.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷ *The Life Divine*, New York : India Library Society, p. 37.

Śrī Aurobindo conceives of the Absolute as a 'biunity'⁸ of Consciousness and Consciousness-force. In the heart of the Absolute is the eternal Two-in-One, symbolized as the union in love of He and She, a union that is expressed both in utter quiescence and in infinite dynamic variations of their bliss.⁹

From the standpoint of integrality Śrī Aurobindo argues that the *māyāvāda* of Śamkarācārya cannot but 'bisect' reality into pure, but vacant, self-existence and full, but illusory, cosmic manifestation. His position is that 'nothing can manifest that is not justified by some self-power of the original and omnipresent Reality.'¹⁰ According to him the transition from eternal and unbroken Oneness to the cosmic manifold is effected through the power of self-limitation which is one of the powers of the Absolute's Consciousness-force.¹¹ Śrī Aurobindo interprets Ignorance (*Avidyā*) as the power of the consciousness-force (*Citsakti*) to 'ignore' or limit its own infinity in order to manifest and experience finite existence in Matter, Life and Mind.¹² The eternal She becomes the powerful Mediatric and the glorious Mother of the Worlds.

As Śrī Aurobindo sees it, the Divine Being is the Absolute because it includes all that is seemingly opposed to its infinite Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. The Great Mother 'plunges' into the depths of non-being in order that She may embrace its inertness and 'inconscience'.¹³ She becomes the Abyss of Incon-

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 295, 322.

⁹ This is the knot that ties together the stars :

The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
The Two who are one are the might and right in things.
His soul, silent, supports the world and her,
His acts are her for commandment's registers.
Happy, inert he lies beneath her feet :
His breast he offers her cosmic dance
Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,
And none could bear but for his strength within
Yet none would leave because of his delight.

Savitri, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁰ *The Life Divine*, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 362-365.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 445-47, 453.

¹³ *On Yoga II Tome One*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-30. Cf. *Savitri*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

science, the great python Night.¹⁴ In Śrī Aurobindo's thought, 'Inconscience' signifies not the total absence of consciousness, but its state of seeming 'self-oblivion'.¹⁵ According to him, consciousness is potentially present in the precise workings of inconscient matter and is awakened in the evolutionary ascent.¹⁶

Thus, in Śrī Aurobindo's thought, the Consciousness-force of the Absolute is the primary principle of integrality, the link between the double abyss, the Abyss of Light above and the Abyss of Darkness below. Through Her the Abyss of Light is revealed as the mystic zero teeming with infinite possibilities.¹⁷ And through Her the Abyss of Darkness is shown to be a seed-bed from which Matter, Life and Mind can emerge. The non-being of Inconscience also becomes a mystic zero containing the myriads.¹⁸

Between the Abyss of Light and the Abyss of Darkness, through a continuous process of self-veiling, the Divine Consciousness-force emanates from Herself a hierarchy of levels of being in each of which a specific configuration of Divine energies is richly displayed.¹⁹ She becomes the shining ladder of being. And, in the Abyss of Darkness, She reverses the movement from 'descent' to 'ascent' from self-veiling to self-revealing and becomes the evolutionary impulse that guides nature to its goal of integral transformation :

Hers is the mystery the Night conceals ;
The spirit's alchemist energy is hers ;
She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God ;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealized Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.²⁰

¹⁴ *Savitri, op. cit.*, p. 79 ; pp. 41, 42 ; pp. 217, 218 ; cf. *The Life Divine, op. cit.*, pp. 593, f.

¹⁵ *The Life Divine, op. cit.*, pp. 524, f. ; p. 491.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-220, p. 735.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, footnote to p. 29 ; p. 284.

¹⁸ *Savitri, op. cit.*, pp. 101, f.

¹⁹ *The Life Divine, op. cit.*, p. 317.

²⁰ *Savitri, op. cit.*, p. 314.

The second principle of integration in Śrī Aurobindo's thought is the 'Supermind'. For Śrī Aurobindo the Supermind is the linking principle that emerges when the Absolute, accepting the purpose of cosmic manifestation, assumes a status of consciousness where the many-in-One is revealed without negating the fundamental Oneness.²¹ In the spiritual ascent the aspiring human consciousness experiences the transforming light of the Supermind 'descending' into it.²² The highest levels of Mind are a 'vaulting board'²³ to reach the integral supramental consciousness of the undivided One becoming the manifold. Śrī Aurobindo insists that the supramental status of the Divine Being must be affirmed; for, otherwise, the yogi may plunge into the utter quiescence of the transcendent aspect of the Absolute, reject the manifold and remain unresponsive to the urgent need to bring the transforming light of the Divine Being into all rungs of the ladder of being.²⁴

The third principle of integration in Śrī Aurobindo's thought is the Psyche or Soul, the divine spark in created beings, the 'miniature divinity' making its habitation in the lower order of Matter-Life-Mind.²⁵ It is the secret guide in the evolutionary process.²⁶ In the human personality the Psyche becomes the 'inmost person', the true centre of individuality.²⁷ The domain of the Psyche is in the levels between the Abyss of Inconscience and the planes of Supramental light. Here the Psyche works with infinite patience to purify, heal and transform all physical and mental energies. In the integral yoga the Psyche is the devotee of God, ever-responsive to the flute-call of the Infinite.²⁸ Its influence calls the yogi back from the experience of the transcendent self and urges him towards the Supramental wholeness.²⁹

²¹ *The Life Divine*, op. cit., pp. 133, f.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 815 f.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²⁴ *On Yoga II Tome One*, op. cit., pp. 105-116. In these letters Śrī Aurobindo explains that his integral yoga differs from earlier yogas in its purpose of total transformation.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307, f.

²⁶ *The Life Divine*, op. cit., pp. 793-797.

²⁷ *On Yoga II Tome One*, op. cit., pp. 309-311.

²⁸ *The Life Divine*, op. cit., p. 794. Cf. *On Yoga II Tome One*, p. 311; p. 321.

²⁹ *Savitri*, op. cit., pp. 289-290.

Śrī Aurobindo makes a clear distinction between the Psyche and the Ego which he considers to be a 'pragmatic and effective fiction',³⁰ a transitional device whose role is confined to a certain phase of the Soul's progression. The Ego comes into effect when Mind emerges from the Life-plane and, supporting itself by aggressive vital impulses, it provides a temporary 'lynch-pin'³¹ to hold the personality together against overwhelming environmental forces. At the same time, the inability of the Ego to creatively embrace all that it considers to be 'non-ego' prevents it from establishing true harmony within the personality and true integration of the individual with his environment.³²

The Ego, (both individual and collective), especially when linked with life's urge for self-enlargement and the Inconscient's downward pull towards rigidity, dullness and delusion, is regarded by Śrī Aurobindo as the focal point where the imperfections of ignorance are twisted into the many-branching distortions of evil.³³ Śrī Aurobindo is profoundly aware of the pervasive power of evil in the world; nevertheless, he never wavers in his vision of the supramental transformation.

In *Savitri* he describes this vision as the aspiring *yogi*, King Aswapathy, sees it :

Ascending and descending 'twixt life's poles
The serried kingdoms of the graded Law
Plunged from the Everlasting into Time,
Then glad of a glory of multitudinous mind
And rich with life's adventure and delight
And packed with the beauty of Matter's shapes and hues
Climbed back from Time into undying Self,
Up a golden ladder carrying the Soul,
Tying with diamond threads the Spirit's extremes.

³⁰ *The Life Divine*, op. cit., p. 555.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 495, 466.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 498-504. In *The Human Cycle* he develops his ideas on the powers and limitations of the mind. See *The Human Cycle*, in *Śrī Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Pondicherry : Śrī Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970, Vol. 15, pp. 95-114.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 476-479.

In this drop from consciousness to consciousness
 Each leaned on the occult Inconscient's power,
 The fountain of its needed Ignorance,
 Archmason of the limits by which it lives.
 In this soar from consciousness to consciousness
 Each lifted tops to that from which it came,
 Origin of all that it had ever been
 And home of all that it could still become.³⁴

II

Śrī Aurobindo links his symbols of 'ascent' and 'descent' with symbols of limitation and concealment, chiefly, the symbol of the 'lid'. A vast, translucent golden lid covers the face of the Divine Sun and conceals the descending Light of lights. A new lid marks each grade of the descent and the lids become gradually more and more opaque until the Abyss of Darkness is reached. When the movement is reversed, these very lids become the broad steps of the ladder of ascent leading from darkness to light, from light to greater light.

Śrī Aurobindo associates the 'brilliant golden lid'³⁵ of the Īśā Upaniṣad with the 'Overmind' which lies just below the Supermind. Here the integral consciousness of the Supermind opens out, as it were, to reveal infinite divine powers separating out and developing independently, without losing their harmony and unity. Just as the spreading rays of the sun blind us by their very brilliance, so the infinite possibilities displayed by the Overmind veil the Supramental planes to the inhabitants of the lower worlds.³⁶ But, if the Overmind is the 'golden lid', it is also the unbreakable 'link'.³⁷ The 'global consciousness' of the Overmind is the intermediary principle between the integral consciousness of the Supermind and reason's method of seeking unity through analysis and synthesis.³⁸ Śrī Aurobindo sees the Overmind as the level where Divine Consciousness—force becomes

³⁴ *Savitri*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

³⁵ *On Yoga II, Tome One*, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

³⁶ *The Life Divine*, *op. cit.*, pp. 256, f.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-265.

vidyā-avidyāmayī—māyā,³⁹ 'the Power that at once connects and divides the Supreme knowledge and the Cosmic Ignorance'.⁴⁰

According to Śrī Aurobindo consciousness at the level of the ordinary mind can be defined as a 'many-sided ignorance striving to become an all-embracing knowledge' or, equally, as 'a limited separative awareness of things striving to become an integral consciousness'.⁴¹ Here the veil that was transparent at the level of the Overmind becomes opaque.⁴² Śrī Aurobindo dwells on the inability of the reasoning mind to achieve wholeness and certitude. Yet, in *The Human Cycle* he writes of the high achievements of reason in the evolutionary ascent: reason achieves some form of control in the personality, guards it against the onslaughts of Inconscience and directs it towards the ideals of individual freedom, human unity, aesthetic beauty and religious knowledge.

In the ladder of being described by Śrī Aurobindo, there are three mental planes above the 'reason-mind' where knowledge becomes direct and intuitive in its method and wider in its scope. He calls these planes the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind and the Intuitive Mind.⁴³ In the integral yoga, these higher levels of the mind are achieved through a 'spiritual transformation' when, at last, the lid of the lower mind is pierced and their light pours through the rifts, pervading the whole personality with clarity and bliss.⁴⁴

Śrī Aurobindo describes the ascent from these planes towards the Supermind as a complex process with no clear-cut line of ascent.

The soul may still be described as a traveller and climber who presses towards his high goal step on step, each of which he has to build up as an integer but most frequently redescend in order to rebuild and make sure of the supporting stair so that it may not crumble beneath him: but the evolution of the whole consciousness has rather the movement of an ascending

³⁹ *In Yoga II Tome One, op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁴⁰ *The Life Divine, op. cit.*, p. 255.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 504. cf *Savitri, op. cit.*, pp. 249-258.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 835-846.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 810.

ocean of Nature ; it can be compared to a tide or a mounting flux, the leading fringe of which touches the higher degrees of a cliff or hill while the rest is still below.⁴⁵

Far below these ascending mental planes is the level of Life, the Vital plane. Śrī Aurobindo sees the descent from Mind to Life as the transition from the twilight of ignorance to the gathering darkness of falsehood. For, according to him, the Vital plane is the chief domain of the Ego.⁴⁶ Driven by Mind's egoistic impulses and blocked by physical weakness, Life becomes prey to all-devouring desire, incapacity and death.⁴⁷ Violence and aggression are the consequences of Life's impulses towards survival and self-enlargement. Yet Life marks the first deliverance of consciousness from the Inconscient. Life creates endlessly, fills the evolving consciousness with a range of emotions where religion and art have their secret roots and—albeit through strife—leads towards mutual self-giving. If evil is born here, so too is love.⁴⁸

The gradual concealment of Divine light ends in the Inconscient on whose soil grow 'the sombre flowers of falsehood and suffering and evil'.⁴⁹ Yet Śrī Aurobindo calls it the 'miraculous Inconscient',⁵⁰ for he regards it as the 'inverse reproduction of the Supreme Superconscience'.⁵¹ It reproduces blindly in the precision of Matter's laws the perfect harmony between knowledge and will in the Supermind.⁵² Here the ladder of ascent finds its stable base.

In *Savitri*, Śrī Aurobindo describes the spiritual ascent. Here the *yogi* is King Aswapathy, the father of Savitri. In his quest the King discovers that the ladder demands a double reversal of movement. His orientation is upward, but he finds that he cannot avoid the descent into the hells of falsehood at the level of the Vital and, deeper still, into the Abyss of the Inconscience for 'None can reach

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 849.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 550-553.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-182.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 533.

⁵⁰ *Savitri*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁵¹ *The Life Divine*, *op. cit.*, p. 491.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 491, f.

heaven who has not passed through hell'.⁵³ And when he has reached at last the heights of the ladder, he finds that the utter quiescence which falls upon him cannot be his final goal. So his inner voice speaks :

Thou has reached the boundless silence of the Self
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss ;
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's power?

.....

Something thou cam'st to do from the Unknown,
But nothing is finished and the world goes on,
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.
Only the everlasting No has neared
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart
But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,
And immortality in the secret heart,
The voice that chants to the Creator Fire,
The symbol Om, the great assenting Word,
The bridge between the rapture and the calm
The passion and beauty of the Bride,
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things ?
This too is Truth at the mystic fount of life.⁵⁴

As the King waits, the silence gives way to a vision of the Mother of the Worlds.

She promises him that her transforming power will become incarnate yet again in his daughter, Savitri, who will be born to him.

Sri Aurobindo's message is clear : when the ladder of being is internalized it must take on the form of the cross of integration. The knowledge that is gained, first at the bottom and then at the top of the vertical poles, must return to the centre to give meaning and support to Matter, Life and Mind which form the horizontal of The Cross. One who seeks integral transformation, as King Aswapathy does, cannot remain in the heights of the Abyss of Light.

⁵³ *Savitri*, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

III

In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,
 In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite
 When all was plunged in the negating void,
 Non-Being's night could never have been saved
 If Being had not plunged into the dark
 Carrying with it its triple mystic cross.
 Invoking in world-time the timeless truth,
 Bliss changed to sorrow, knowledge made ignorant,
 God's force turned into a child's helplessness
 Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice.⁵⁵

The cosmic Ladder of being could not have come into existence without God's triple mystic cross. According to Śrī Aurobindo, 'mind is a subordinate power of Supermind', created when Divine knowledge accepts the cross of Ignorance; 'Life is similarly a subordinate power of the energy aspect of Sachchidananda,' created when Divine Consciousness-force takes up the cross of 'a child's helplessness' and, Matter is the substantial form which Divine being assumes when it subjects itself to phenomenal existence.⁵⁶ Divine bliss becomes immanent in finite existence as the soul in the heart of every creature through the cross of sorrow.⁵⁷

In the writings of Śrī Aurobindo the symbol of sacrifice appears together with the symbol of the cross. The Divine Mother accepts the experience of ignorance and suffering in order to gather it up into the true unity and harmony of her consciousness and thus to redeem it: 'This is the great sacrifice sometimes called the sacrifice of Purusha, but more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother'.⁵⁸ Śrī Aurobindo has here re-interpreted the familiar hymn of the sacrifice of Puruṣa in the R̥gveda in such a way as to emphasize that sorrow, pain, division, ignorance and even utter despair which is the cross of Inconscience, are no strangers to the Divine experience.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

⁵⁶ *The Life Divine*, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Śrī Aurobindo regards the soul or psyche as 'a projection and action' of Divine bliss.

⁵⁸ *The Mother in Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 25, p. 25.

Though Śrī Aurobindo accepts these symbols of Divine suffering, he always interprets Divine self-limitation as a purposeful deployment of Divine Consciousness. In *The Life Divine* he sees the Divine self-veiling as a form of Divine Tapas, an 'exclusive concentration of consciousness'⁵⁹ for a specific purpose. And, in his view, every aspect of the Divine self-limitation in every level of the Ladder of being is purposeful. Even falsehood, evil and all the forces of the 'Undivine' have their purpose. Without ignorance of infinity there could have been no finite existence but, once ignorance is admitted, falsehood follows in its wake. For ignorance to endure it must be reinforced by all that is seemingly contrary to the Divine nature. 'For without that perversion imperfection could have no standing ground, could not freely manifest and maintain its nature as against the presence of the underlying Divinity'.⁶⁰

In one of his letters Śrī Aurobindo says that the presence of 'hostile forces' in the world serves the purpose of bringing all the possibilities of Inconscience and ignorance out into the open 'for this world was meant to be a working out of these possibilities with the Supramental harmonisation as its eventual outcome'.⁶¹

It cannot be concluded that because Śrī Aurobindo continually puts before us a vision of hope he underplays the problem of pain. The symbol of the cross appears again in *Savitri* when the travail of the Mother of Life is described :

Even with the Light denied that sent her forth
And the hope dead she needs for her task,
Even when her brightest stars are quenched in Night,
Nourished by hardship and calamity
And with pain for her body's handmaid, masseuse, nurse,
Her tortured spirit continues still
To toil though in darkness, to create though with pangs ;
She carries crucified God upon her breast.⁶²

Śrī Aurobindo's philosophical position is that the contradictions and the sufferings of the lower level are resolved by being

⁵⁹ *The Life Divine*, op. cit., p. 241.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁶¹ *On Yoga II Tome One*, op. cit., p. 401.

⁶² *Savitri*, op. cit., p. 180.

embraced in a more comprehensive unity at a higher level. This position has its critics, for it seems to imply that the coherence of the whole has higher value than the unique natures of the specific individuals who compose it. Is the present suffering of individual persons to be discounted if it leads to the future harmony of the cosmic whole? Śrī Aurobindo is well aware of these problems. In *The Life Divine* he argues that an integral view of existence avoids the pitfalls of other positions which cause a rift in the fabric of life by rejecting either material or spiritual values. And, in his integral yoga, he suggests a method by which individuals can enter into and existentially test the values and problems of moving from an ego-centric position to a continuous affirmation of wholeness and harmony.

IV

Śrī Aurobindo accepts the idea of *Avatāra* but interprets it in the light of his vision of integral transformation. In one of his letters⁶³ he says that when God first took up the cross and plunged into the Night of Inconscience, in his vast compassion he simultaneously established the conditions for a 'transforming emergence'. In His compassion He takes up the cross again and again as *Avatāra*, repeating the original act of entering into the world of Inconscience and ignorance, until all beings are led to their fulfilment and Matter is filled with God's light.

The *Avatāra* must take up the cross of pain because pain is the very fabric of life on earth as long as ignorance reigns :

Pain is the signature of the Ignorance

Attesting the secret god denied by life :

Until life finds him pain can never end.⁶⁴

Yet joy is the twin of pain, for pain is the 'dread teacher' who breaks the resistance and inertia of the human heart and teaches it 'to climb towards the Sun'.⁶⁵

⁶³ *On Yoga II, Tome One, op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶⁴ *Savitri, op. cit.*, p. 453.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 443.

When the Son of God drinks the cup of pain, he pays 'the debt the Eternal owes to the fallen kind'. For God has laid on mankind the burden of living in a world where all that is contrary to God—Inconscience, ignorance and falsehood—are allowed to unfold their dread possibilities in order that all may be regathered and redeemed in God.

It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice,
Offered by God's martyred body for the world
Gethsemane and Calvary are his lot,
He carries the cross on which man's soul is nailed
He who has found identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.
His knowledge immortal triumphs by his death.
Hewn, quartered on the scaffold he falls
His crucified voice proclaims, 'I, I am God ;'
'Yes all is God' peals back Heaven's deathless call.
The flower of Godhead grows on the world-tree
All shall discover God in self and things
But when God's messenger comes to help the world
And lead the soul of earth to higher things,
He too must carry the yoke he came to unloose ;
He too must bear the pangs that he would heal.
Exempt and unafflicted by earth's fate,
How shall he cure the ills he never felt ?⁶⁶

By taking up the cross of pain, the *Avatāra* realizes his identity with the God who first took up the triple mystic cross. Also, by taking up the cross of pain, he affirms his identity with those who dwell in the darkness of ignorance, for 'pain is the signature of ignorance'. Through him they draw closer to the knowledge that 'all is God'. The work of the world-redeemer is not complete until Matter is 'turned to spirit-stuff'.⁶⁷

In Śrī Aurobindo's epic poem, Savitri herself is the symbol of the power through which the *Avatārā's* work is accomplished. Savitri discovers that in her soul and in the soul of all beings the bliss of the Absolute is incarnate as a dynamic centre of love which

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 445, 446.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 447, cf. p. 451.

can transform pain into a greater joy.⁶⁸ When Savitri meets Death, he tries to break her conviction in the power of love with all the arguments that are sounded every day, everywhere against Savitri's position. He reminds her that it is a world of pain, evil and falsehood, and that all are under the law of death. She answers that the present is but a stage of transition in the world's evolution. The creative energy of the Divine Mother is present here and now as transforming love. She refuses to forget the world and to enter into a state of solitary peace. She and her husband must take their place in this world.

My will is greater than thy law, O Death ;
 My love is stronger than the bonds of Fate :
 Our love is the heavenly seal of the Supreme.
 I guard that seal against thy rendering hands.
 Love must not cease to live upon the earth ;
 For Love is the bright link, 'twixt earth and heaven,
 Love is the far Transcendent's angel here ;
 Love is man's lien on the Absolute.⁶⁹

In the *Human Cycle* Śrī Aurobindo argues that, although technology and political statesmanship can pave the way, only a complete re-orientation in the hearts of people can break the present pattern of enlarging collective egos and achieve genuine harmony.

In his work *Evolution in Religion*,⁷⁰ R. C. Zaehner has outlined the similarities between the views of Śrī Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The difference between them is one of emphasis. Śrī Aurobindo visualizes the transformation taking place in this very earth and in the body of flesh—every level of the great ladder of being must remain. Even Inconscient Night is not destroyed but is changed into 'silver peace' and in her 'mystic folds of light' she nurses 'a greater dawn'.^{71*}

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 515.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 633.

⁷⁰ R. C. Zaehner, *Evolution in Religion*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1971.

⁷¹ *Savitri*, *op. cit.*, p. 724.

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EVANGELISM: THE ENCOUNTER OF FAITHS IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD

CHARLES A. RYERSON

In some walks of life it may be true that if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing badly. But this is not one of them. The stakes are too high. For in the last analysis, the very shape of the world in which we live may well be determined, amid the welter of religions, ideologies (also involving faith, let us not forget), doctrines, theories and impressions, by what takes place in the human mind and heart at the point where faith meets faith.

—Eric J. Sharpe, *Faith Meets Faith*

After spending twenty-seven years bouncing between India and America, I find myself more concerned than ever with 'what takes place in the human mind and heart at the point where faith meets faith'. Not too long ago I attended a major missionary conference in the United States. It was an unusual decision for me because I am primarily a historian of religion, but I was invited and I went. The conference brought together a wide range of approaches to Christian mission and evangelism. One of the groups distributed a relatively new magazine, *Today's Mission*, put out by a para-Church organization centred in southern California. A speaker hailed this publication 'primarily edited by young people' as having a quality close to that of *National Geographic* magazine. Indeed, it did have many colour photographs, but its spelling left much to be desired!

The Neo-Conservatives

I was immediately intrigued because *Today's Mission* had on its cover a colourful photo of Indians bathing in the Ganges, under which appeared the caption, 'India: A desolate people in search of God'. The editorial trumpeted:

India is the tragic story of a vast nation left for centuries to the binding clutches of Satan. The striking existence

of its 30 million gods is more than mind-boggling. It demonstrates that the people of India have been searching; that they need and want to know the true God. But the sad reality is that they have failed to find Him. What is the reason for this despairing (*sic*) fact? . . . India has failed to find God and we have failed to take Him there . . .¹

The article dwelt on such phrases as 'thin, dark-skinned populace' and urged 'missionary specialists' to be 'elusive about their intent when applying for a visa.'²

In addition to providing more than ample justification for the Indian Government's visa policy, this magazine and its article may seem to have no significance. The same sentiments have been expressed in crudely printed tracts ever since the modern mission movement began. The very slickness of the magazine, however, and its obvious financial resources point yet again to the growing power of the new right wing conservatives in mission circles.

As soon as I glanced at the article two incidents flashed through my mind. One took place several years ago in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. I was watching a religious procession winding through the streets of the old temple city. Seeing an image of a god I didn't recognize, I asked a somewhat ragged *coolie* standing next to me who the god was. He looked at me rather condescendingly and replied, 'That's no god, God is love (*anbu* in Tamil).' So much for the power of the 'binding clutches of Satan'.

The other incident was one about which I read. In the ravaged Bronx section of New York City, Mother Teresa has set up a branch of her Missionaries of Charity. One of the Indian nuns commented to a reporter that in New York old people presented more of an emotional need than a material one. 'In India, even with the poverty, they have children and grandchildren around. At least they're together even if they're lacking things of the world. Here (in N.Y.) people . . . are just so alone.'³ One wonders which culture is really desolate.

¹ *Today's Mission*, Pasadena, California (March-April), 1982, p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *The New York Times*, April 6, 1979.



Despite its financial strength and chauvinistic appeals, I am not going to spend more time on this neo-conservative approach of evangelism to other religions. Its condescending, pseudo-intellectual, stifling stance remains arid and heretical. Study after study demonstrates that these groups, in addition to their theological superficiality, draw mainly from each other and from others from 'churched' backgrounds. Their appeal to non-Christians remains very limited.⁴

The Secular Liberationists

Two other more serious approaches to the encounter of faiths are attempting to occupy centre stage. One of these was well-represented at the conference I attended. Its strongest backers came from Latin America but it had its advocates from every continent and is well-known in India. It is, of course, called 'liberation theology' and draws part of its inspiration from Marxist theory. That theory may leave something to be desired.

Karl Marx, in 1853, saw British rule in India as having 'a double mission to fulfill . . . one destructive, and the other regenerative—the annihilation of the old Asiatic society—and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.'⁵ Improved communications, especially the railways, would lead this transformation, followed by the rise of modern industry. That industry 'will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress'⁶ For him, India's worst feature was 'the self-sufficient inertia' caused by the 'stereotype and disconnected atoms' of Indian villages and castes. There is no doubt that Marx expected that Indian development would follow the pattern alleged to characterize Western history. For Marx, modern India would be both Western and socialist in a Western way.

⁴ See, for example, the study, 'Circulation of the Saints Revisited' by Reginald W. Bibby and Merlin B. Brinkerhoff. Only 13% of the converts to the conservative congregations they studied came from outside that background and of those only one in four could be considered to be of a 'non-churched' background. From a paper given at the meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Providence, R.I., October 22, 1982.

⁵ Karl Marx, 'The British Rule in India,' *Selected Works*, II, p. 652.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 661-662.

There is much⁷ doubt as to whether India ever had such atomized inertia. Oscar Lewis, a noted anthropologist, has suggested that India's traditional system was a 'rural cosmopolitanism', with every village and caste related in complex ways to net-works of others. Marx, however, was propounding a philosophy of history and a theory of social science which many others have since followed. Rather than treating tradition (*Gemeinschaft*—community) and modernity (*Gesellschaft*—society) as ideal types to be used for the purpose of analysis, he 'historicized' them, posting a 'progressive' linear movement through time in which 'tradition' inexorably and irretrievably becomes 'modernity'—which is Western.

I am distressed by this simplistic social theory which has distorted Christians' ability to more accurately discern the world around them. I am even more disturbed that so many Christian theologians view Marx's ethnocentric and imperialistic ideas as a model on which to build.

Liberation theology is in many ways an outgrowth of 'secular theology'. From different directions the thought of Barth, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer has also been used to advance the idea that secularization of traditional societies is a desirable and feasible goal. One of the best of these thinkers is Arend Th. van Leeuwen, whose book, *Christianity in World History*, states the position most boldly. Van Leeuwen utilized Friedrich Gogarten's definition of secularization: a historical movement whereby 'human existence comes to be determined by the dimension of time and history'.⁷ Secularization is not the closed ideology of secularism but a necessary consequence of the Christian faith whereby humans are freed from mythological bondage to explore the secular realm for its treasures and their advancement.

Van Leeuwen has his own progressive dichotomy, the movement from 'ontocratic' to 'theocratic'. Ontocracy is primarily present in Asia. It posits a monistic pattern of thought whose myths and symbols stress the primordial identity of humans with the whole cosmos. Ritual and ethics are conservative and are designed to maintain or recreate harmony with the cosmic order.

⁷ Arend Th. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964, p. 334.

Theocracy on the other hand, is rooted in Old Testament prophetic religion. Humans have a covenant relation to their God which releases them to be 'creative and critical reshapers of the structures of the world'. Theocratic existence is historic existence and theocratic ethics are revolutionary. Van Leeuwen, and others, view the encounter of Eastern societies with 'modernity' as an example of continuing expansion of secularization and therefore of a history that has its centre in Christ.⁸

I accept that secularization can be a part of the Providence of God. After all, Luther said somewhere that perhaps God would rather hear the curses of the ungodly than the 'alleluias of the pious'. What I object to in van Leeuwen's thought is exactly what I object to in Marx's social theory (and in the neo-conservatives): the viewpoint is ethnocentric, one-sided, and imposes a simplistic pattern on history. Perhaps Eastern religions were never as closed as van Leeuwen thinks they were. I feel certain they were not.

A Critique from Tamil Nadu

A couple of examples from Tamil Nadu's long history point to a considerable openness to change. *Anbu*, love, the word the Tamil *coolie* used when he replied to my question during the religious procession, was present in Tamil by the time the Christian era dawned. A. L. Basham, the well-known Australian scholar of India, has written that *anbu* contains a concept of 'the love of God . . . reflected by the worshipper in love for his fellows'.⁹ Tirumular, a semi-legendary figure who lived around the sixth or seventh century A.D., strongly articulated *anbu*, self-giving love: 'The ignorant think that love (*anbu*) and Siva are two different things; they do not know that love is Siva.'¹⁰ He also could say, 'Mankind is one and God is one' ('One God and one community').¹¹

⁸ This discussion is drawn not only from van Leeuwen but from a discussion by Carl F. Hallencreutz, *New Approaches to Men of Other Faiths*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970, pp. 68-69.

⁹ A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, New York: Grove Press, 1959, p. 331.

¹⁰ *Love of God*, trans. and ed. M. Dhavamony, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 128.

¹¹ R. Rangachari, trans., *An Anthology of Indian Literature*, ed. K. Santhanam, Bombay: Bahantya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, p. 584.

The later Tamil *siddhars*, an iconoclastic wandering group of *yogins* who echoed pan-Indian *siddhar* themes, continued Tirumular's approach. Pattirahiriyar, a *siddhar*, probably lived between the tenth and twelfth centuries. His *Lamentations* (*Pulambal*) are well-known to the common people of Tamil Nadu. A verse goes as follows :

When shall we be one great brotherhood
Unbroken by the tyranny of caste
Which Kapila in early days withstood
And taught that men were one in times now passed ?¹²

Here *anbu*, in the ideal of a casteless brotherhood, is extended to the social structure. A future hope is expressed in terms of what is claimed to be a past reality. A casteless society is what is longed for, not as a good for which one strives, but as a return to an original condition. Change is desired but it is change legitimated by an archaic model.

The figure Pattirahiriyar turns to is Kapila, already a quasi-mythical figure in Pattirahiriyar's day. Kapila is almost certainly the author of the *Kapila Ahaval*, a document of which the following lines are representative :

Oh Brahmins, list to me
In all this blessed land
There is but one great caste
One tribe and brotherhood,
One God doth dwell above,
And he hath made us one
In birth and frame and tongue.

If, therefore, Oh ye fools
You would observe and do
The precepts of your ancestors,
Give alms to all who need,
And, as for this life, avoid
All that is mean¹³

¹² Charles E. Gover, trans. and ed., *Folk Songs of Southern India*, London : Trubner and Co., 1872, p. 159.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

The *Kapila Ahaval* is probably no older than the ninth century but, even for the slightly later Pattirahiriyar, it has great legitimacy because it bears Kapila's name. Kapila is a time-honoured figure in the Tamil country. Around the first or second century A.D. there had been a legendary poet named Kapila who was the friend of a great chieftain, Pari. The name, Kapila, also conjures up images of an early North Indian figure traditionally associated with *Sankya Yoga* philosophy.

From this small example one can discover that the Tamil tradition, as other Indian traditions, was always in flux. There was always protest against Brahminic superiority and the *varna* (caste) system. This protest justified itself by appealing to an earlier age. One sees here a clear illustration of what Milton Singer, M. N. Srinivas and other anthropologists familiar with India have termed the 'traditionalization of change'. Change is always present and it is consciously adopted, not as a movement toward a future ideal, but as an attempt to regain what is viewed as a lost ideal. In the Tamil (*siddhars*) it was an attempt to recreate an original cosmic order (to use van Leeuwen's terms) but, while conservative in the sense that it sought to conserve what it viewed as a primal set of values, that conservatism served to make its advocates 'creative and critical reshapers of the structures of the world,' to echo van Leeuwen's terminology.

To subsume the many cultures of this world under sweeping generalizations like 'ontocratic' and 'theocratic' is to avoid the difficult but necessary research into these cultures that should be part of the Christian encounter with them. While 'tradition' and 'modernity', 'ontocracy' and 'theocracy' may be useful—as the pioneering sociologist Max Weber found—as ideal types the actual historical record of cultures presents a much more ambiguous and complex picture.

Rather than secularization, it may well be that the concept of a chosen people moving through history guided by a special destiny has been the Judeo-Christian contribution to a sense of directed history. This has led not to secularization but to a growth of quasi-religious nationalisms which often act as idolatrous surrogate religions or which justify themselves through traditional religions.

In Tamil Nadu, politics has been dominated for more than fifteen years by 'Dravidian' movements that call for a more 'rational religion' than traditional Hinduism but they venerate the *siddhars* and use Tirumular's ancient slogan 'Mankind is one and God is one' ('One God and one community') as their own. While praising modernization they discover their identity deep in their own interpretations of Tamil Nadu's past. This movement is so dominant today that its two major parties, the *A. I. A. D. M. K.* and the *D. M. K.*, which feud with each other, in a by-election to the *Lok Sabha* in September, 1982, swept the vote to such a degree that all other parties, including Indira Gandhi's Congress, forfeited their deposits.

Thus 'modernity' has brought new vitality to many 'traditional' religions and cultures—although that renewal of tradition is coupled with a sense of directed change, of history. After the Iranian revolution this viewpoint should need relatively little defending. Everywhere around the world, from the 'New Right' in America, to Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, to Buddhists in Thailand and Burma, to virtually the entire Islamic world, one discovers aroused nationalisms expressing themselves in religious, rather than secular, idioms. Some of these movements are creative, some are destructive, and many are both, but they actively challenge the notion that 'religion' is vanishing or is irrelevant to an interpretation of the contemporary world scene.

The truth seems to confirm what early sociologists such as Max Weber and Emil Durkheim postulated more than fifty years ago. Humankind has an urging toward transcendence, it seeks a justifying meaning for life. Groups need to sacralize their central values. Perhaps anthropologist Conrad Arensberg, who has done some research in India, has put it most simply and succinctly: 'Modernization proceeds as much by accommodating old and new together as by sweeping the old aside.'¹⁴ Later he mentions the importance of identifying 'persistences and transformations in the wake of worldwide modernizing pressures' and he remarks that many groups are 'not necessarily abandoning but rather expanding their ancient ways.'¹⁵ Identifying these

¹⁴ Conrad Arensberg, 'Foreword,' Owen Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, p. IX.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. X.

persistences and transformations—and expansions—is an important part of the Christian encounter with cultures and religions. A native belief in a modernizing and secularizing world, in which tradition and religion progressively vanish, can only inhibit that essential task.

It was an article by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, long associated with India, that first spurred van Leeuwen to begin his book.¹⁶ Last year, in a private conversation, Bishop Newbigin said to me that probably the secularization argument had been carried too far. 'What I see around me,' said the Bishop, 'is not a secular England but a pagan England.' Paganism, of course, is very different from secularization. 'Human existence is becoming increasingly determined by the dimension of time and history' but those histories and views of time differ radically. It is religious, pluralism which is growing, not secularization.

The New Spirituality

If I am disturbed by the many one-sided theologies of the secular, I am even more upset by another breed of theologian/social scientist who writes of the Christian encounter with other religions. I call this view 'the new spirituality'. It was not well represented at the conference I attended, although the respected scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith articulated a version of it. For Smith,

Faith is always in essence one and the same expression of man's relationship to the Transcendent Faith is simply faith and it matters not at all whether that faith be expressed in the thought patterns, symbols, and imagery of the Hindu, Christian, Muslim, or Jewish traditions. The encounter of religions, therefore, is the encounter which penetrates the mundane observables of the individual traditions (where they remain, of course, vitally important) into the depths where faith lives (where they do not).¹⁷

Smith must be respected because of his long and fruitful labours in the field of scholarship and evangelism.

¹⁶ See Arend Th. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964, pp. 15-16. Newbigin's article appeared in C. C. West and D. M. Paton (eds.), *The Missionary Church in East and West* London: S.C.M. Press, 1959.

¹⁷ Eric J. Sharpe, *Faith Meets Faith*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1977, p. 150.

Many of the writers who express variants of this viewpoint are relatively recent converts to the new spirituality. Harvey Cox is *Turning East* from *The Secular City*. Bishop John A.T. Robinson is no longer *Honest to God* since he has discovered that *Truth is Two-Eyed*. Peter Berger has abandoned *The Homeless Mind* to embrace *The Heretical Imperative*.¹⁸

More serious than these 'pop' expressions, however, is the viewpoint of the philosopher of religion, John Hick. In 1973 he published *God and the Universe of Faiths*, proving that he, too, had discovered a plurality of religions in the world. As with almost all of these recent discoverers of non-Western religions, he displays virtually no knowledge of earlier writings on—and wrestlings with—the subject. He has since published *Truth and Dialogue in World Religions—Conflicting Truth-Claims*—an incredible 'dialogue' since all the participants in the work, except one, are Westerners (although several are very able Westerners). As recently as January 21, 1981, Hick has written in *The Christian Century* of how he discovered only 'ten or twelve years ago' that it 'seems more important and more illuminating to study the multifarious relationships of humankind as a whole to the divine than to study as an isolated phenomenon only that particular form

¹⁸ It is somewhat wicked to do so but I cannot resist commenting on Peter Berger's first trip to India in 1979. The only Protestant worship service he attended was at St. Mark's Cathedral in Bangalore. He went while visiting the C.I.S.R.S. Writing about this later, he was 'struck by the fact that many people left their shoes behind and walked up barefoot to receive communion, and I reflected that no Western penitential meaning was to be ascribed to this, but rather the more interesting meaning that Indians normally take their shoes off at home. This congregation of Indian Christians felt perfectly at home in this setting, which, to an outsider seemed like a curious cultural transplant'. Peter Berger, 'A Funeral in Calcutta,' *Theology Today* (October 1979), p. 399. These Christians were indeed 'more at home' than even Berger realized. Taking off one's shoes in a place of worship is, of course, an ancient custom not only in India but in much of the Near East and Japan. These worshippers were adapting a Hindu principle to their Christian worship. (But perhaps Westerners are really adapting a Western custom when *they* wear shoes in Church.) We are all syncretists but Berger's failure to see the bare feet in relation to Indian forms of worship (he rejected 'Western penitentialism') demonstrates the danger of Western social scientists, deeply involved for several years in advancing the claims of the secular, being converted to the new spirituality, rushing off to India, observing briefly, and then dashing back to the U.S.A. to write about it. I should add here that I found Bishop Robinson's (another pilgrim to the C.I.S.R.S.) book very helpful. He was an astute observer and a careful footnote-giver, giving credit where credit was due.

of faith within which I happen to be.¹⁹ He delights in informing us that he has spent 'nearly a year in Hindu India and Buddhist Sri Lanka.'²⁰

Obviously I cannot present here an adequate exposition of Hick's theoretical viewpoint, but one gains the flavour of it through a quotation from the article which echoes the 'pop' sentiments I mentioned earlier :

Occasionally attending worship in mosque and synagogue, temple and gurdwara, I came to see as evident that essentially the same activity takes place in them as in a Christian church : human beings meet, within the framework of a particular religious culture, to open their spirits to a higher reality which is regarded both as being the source of all their good and as making a total claim upon the living of their lives. It has become abundantly clear to me that each of the great world faiths constitutes a perception of and a response to the ultimate divine reality which they all in their different ways affirm, and also that within each there are to be found true saints through whom the Transcendent shines within the fabric of our human life.²¹

To see as 'evident' and 'abundantly clear'—especially on the basis of such limited experience—what puzzles so many historians of religion, is surely a sign of egocentrism run wild. How can he affirm what even those in the mosque, gurdwara, and synagogue do not affirm? His 'Buddhist Sri Lanka' and 'Hindu India' are in reality pluralist societies, often rent by conflicts between Hindus and Buddhists in one and among Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in the other. Shouldn't philosophers of religion pay attention to the worshippers' opinions of themselves and of the sacred which *they* worship? Isn't the articulation of *their* faith important? Here the Imperialism and ethnocentrism of Marx is stood on its head with a vengeance. The new spirituality is discovered and embraced uncritically or by an unconsciously Western standard.

¹⁹ John Hick, 'Pluralism and the Reality of the Transcendent,' *The Christian Century* (January 21, 1981), p. 45.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*

As a historian of religion, I am convinced that subjective faith is only made publicly available through the articulated expressions of it. One can speak of faith only through the public vehicles of symbols, myths, and rituals—religions—which can be observed, read about, and listened to. These sets of symbols, myths, and rituals give a unique ethos, tone, tint to each religious tradition. That distinctive ethos determines, to a large degree, the way in which adherents of each tradition approach what they feel is contact with the Transcendent—and what that Transcendent is. To attempt to separate an 'essence' of faith from the faithful's public expressions of it is not only a fruitless but misleading pastime. The public vehicles of faith are not accidental; they are shaping and determining factors of the faith. One may be able to subjectively distinguish 'faith' from 'religion' but one cannot express or observe faith apart from religion. I am reminded of Rabindranath Tagore's comment when he first visited Indonesia: 'I see India all around me but I don't recognize it.' Myths, symbols, and rituals from India had deeply affected Indonesia but they had 'mixed' differently, giving Indonesia its own distinctive ethos. I can only agree with Eric Sharpe when he writes,

It is only through a dialogue in which the actual lives of actual believers come to full expression—as they are and not as the theologian or comparative religionist would shape them—that believers can find a common way to deeper understanding of themselves, of one another, and of God.²²

Dialogue with actual Hindus is one of my favourite occupations. And one of my most enjoyable dialogue partners is Chidambaram, a Tamil just a bit younger than I, with whom I've dialogued for almost twenty-five years. I cheerfully confess that there is not much evidence of his 'becoming Christian' in any sense that I understand or represent. I do have the conviction, however, that Chidambaram and I are being transformed as we participate together in his culture.

A fairly recent letter from Chidambaram, who is certainly not of the Westernized elite, portrays his present position. Here are a few excerpts:

²² Sharpe, *Faith Meets Faith*, p. 150.



The faith in me began to grow more and more. I do not like to return to the other world where people are thinking that their religion is superior to the other. That is the main reason for all these calamities. All this chaos in this world is started only because of (exclusive) religion. All religions are best. I differ from your opinion that there is one best religion. (So much for my twenty-five year attempt to try to get him to accept the Barthian distinction between religion and faith !) In the ways that all are leading towards Him, all are best in one way or the other. If we study all religions and have faith in all of them, then only can we have faith in Him. All paths are leading toward 'One God'. Otherwise I can say all paths are coming from one place I have decided from now to grow my faith in Him by having faith in all religion. If you feel mine right, all right. Otherwise, also all right.

One can see just how close Chidambaram's position is to that of the new spiritualists. This is not surprising for their perspective is essentially neo-Hindu although they ground it in different roots. This does not necessarily make them, or Chidambaram, mistaken but one wonders how any kind of meaningful dialogue can go on when both partners are convinced that they share a common essential faith and the outward forms and expressions of that faith are only accidental and meaningless. Good dialogue needs good disagreement. It is this that provides the toughness which can make for mutual discovery and transformation. Neo-spiritualist and neo-Hindu dialogue simply dissolves into a saccharine celebration of abstract 'faith'.

One can leave these new spiritualists with the words of the Roman Catholic Klaus Klostermaier, who in his book *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (U.S. edition entitled *In the Paradise of Krishna*) has written the best account of dialogue between a Christian and Hindus that I have yet read. With that aloof abrasiveness for which I so admire him, Klostermaier writes :

The theologian at 70°F with a well-fed god compiles very nicely what other theologians at 70°F with well-fed gods have written before him. Everything is well documented ; the footnotes take up almost half the page. French, English,

Latin and Greek authors are quoted. They know exactly that God's grace, like American development aid, is meant for all heathen, for the pro-US ones as well as for the others. The former get a little more. If only everybody follows nicely the road prescribed by their ministers and prelates, there will be enough for everybody. This is very convenient for the 70°F theologians ; in that case they do not have to go themselves to where it is 120°F.....

They have an easy time, the 70°F theologians. They settle down in some library and find enough books there by means of which it can be proved that the non-Christian religions are the normal way to salvation for the non-Christian, that each one finds God even without mission—that one should not disturb the conscience of a non-Christian. In Europe's libraries no goats die of heat-stroke, there are no vultures and no dogs eating the goats.²³

Klostermaier points in the right direction. The encounter of faith with faith cannot be done primarily in the library or classroom and it cannot operate out of a predetermined theology or social theory. The interaction of the 'modern' with the 'traditional', the 'secular' with the 'religious', the 'ontocratic' with the 'theocratic', 'cosmos' with 'history' must be observed *in action*. It must come from a theology and/or social theory which has been *lived*.

I have briefly discussed three approaches to evangelism, the Christian encounter with other religions: the neo-conservative, the secular-liberationist, and the neo-spiritualist. The first two are consciously ethnocentric; the first in that it equates its brand of Christian religion with salvation, the second in that it posits a linear model of progressive secularization which it views as the working out of the Judeo-Christian prophetic message. For both of these approaches other religions are either Satanic (the neo-conservatives) or an ultimately outmoded opiate (the secular-liberationists). The neo-spiritualists, love religion, seeing in all of its outward manifestations an underlying universal essence,

²³ Klaus Klostermaier, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1969, pp. 41, 47-48.

the faith of religious humankind. It, too, is usually ethnocentric, however, for it tends to read its own religious viewpoints into the faith of others.

Dialogue: Acts 10 : 1-35

My own approach is not at all original. It emphasizes dialogue with individuals and with cultures—one's own and others. While not new, this position did not have a major public advocate at the conference I attended, leading me to believe that it often needs to be rethought and re-evaluated. Klostermaier sets the problem. In an article which preceded and foreshadowed his actual experiment in dialogue, he wrote : ' We do need a theology of dialogue—but still more we need a theology for dialogue—and more than anything else we need a genuine dialogue in depth, which is very rare as yet.'²⁴ Dialogue, according to another source, refers to 'any honest confrontation between adherents of different religions where the participants meet and challenge each other testifying to the depth of their own experience to what stands forth as being of ultimate concern, and it implies a challenge to the Christian to listen to and understand the partner of another faith'.²⁵

The New Testament story, recounted in Acts 10 : 1-35, of the conversion of Cornelius, best illustrates, for me, the theme of Christian dialogue with those who come from other cultures and religions. My black friends in America continually remind me that Cornelius was not the first Gentile convert; that honour goes to the Ethiopian eunuch, a person much more racially and sexually suspect than the good Cornelius !

We read that Cornelius was a good man, although a Roman, and angels urged him to seek out Peter. Peter, a practicing Jewish Christian who followed all the laws of his Jewish tradition, is granted a vision of what he considered to be unclean foods. But God tells him that all that he has created is clean. When Cornelius' representatives visit him, Peter understands and goes to Cornelius,

²⁴ Klaus Klostermaier, 'Dialogue—The Work of God,' in H. Jai Singh, *Inter-religious Dialogue*, Bangalore : CISRS, 1967, p. 118. Jai Singh's book is an extremely valuable and early source on dialogue.

²⁵ *Study Encounter*, Vol. III, No. 2, pp. 53ff. Quoted in Hallencreutz, p. 17.

pointing out that he, Peter, is not the sacred one and should not be bowed down to. Both Peter and Cornelius are changed by their meeting.

This passage says at least four things to me about evangelism—the encounter of faith with faith. First, no person is unacceptable or unclean to the Christian God. God shows no partiality and has no favourites. Our God is a God who loves all persons and all nations. This sounds like such a simple lesson: truly God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth. Often, however, it is difficult for Christians to accept this simple truth. Somehow, Christians feel, while God may love everyone, surely he loves us and other Christians the best! At least Christians must be the first among equals. The text is clear, however. God loves all equally: Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, Christian, Communist, etc. No person is unacceptable or unclean to the God of the New Testament.

The second lesson of this passage is that while all persons are loved equally and share a common humanity because of their common Creator, still they are differentiated from each other by their nationhood, their culture. Peter is clearly a very Jewish Christian, obeying the dietary and hospitality laws of his Jewish culture. Cornelius is just as obviously a Gentile. He is a good man but, nonetheless, an officer of the dreaded Italian Cohort, part of an occupying army enforcing imperialistic rule. But (and this is the second part of the second lesson) God's spirit works through history and culture. It met Peter and Cornelius in the midst of their own histories. The spirit of God is always incarnated in specific acts and deeds in history and culture. Culture is such an important category precisely because it is different for different people and nations. No challenge is greater for the person who goes forth in the name of Christ than confronting a culture which is different from one's own. It is not only in food and dress but in everyday habits that one discovers the vast differences and barriers of culture.

Every society, for example, has social hypocrisies. We all have them and they are accepted by all because they help us to get through difficult social encounters. India has these social hypocrisies, as does America, but the important point to remember

is not that they are hypocrisies but that they are different. I well remember an exuberant, outgoing, 'executive type' American church official (I shall not mention his denomination !) who once visited me in India. He walked up to one of my usually articulate Indian friends with his confident smile, his hand out-thrust, and he bellowed, 'I'm so glad to meet you !' My friend looked at him with genuine puzzlement and quietly asked, 'Why ?'

The major barrier to creative Western-Indian contact, however, is Western in construction. It is the division erected by Western racial arrogance during the past three hundred years. The destructive effects of this air of superiority were most forcefully brought home to me in one unforgettable experience. I was riding on an Indian train and came one night to a small station far from any city. I had to wait until morning for a connecting train, so I spent the night sleeping on the station platform. In the morning the stationmaster found me there and invited me into the station for breakfast. Like most stationmasters he was educated and spoke fluent English. He was lonely in the little backwater station. We were carrying on a rather sophisticated conversation (probably about Shakespeare) when he suddenly said, 'Most Westerners think we're black monkeys. You don't think that, do you ?' The anguished poignancy of that question has never ceased to haunt me. It is often forgotten that the scars left by Imperialism are not primarily economic. When one studies Western-Third World relations, one should remember Freud as well as Marx ! I am certain, however, that God's creative spirit, his Word, Christ, was speaking to me in all these specific intercultural encounters. That is where Christ continually incarnates himself, leading us forward, 'cleaning up' (as Acts puts it) peoples and cultures all the time.

However, while we are all creatures of a given culture, the encounter with Christ always should mean that Christians break with culture. This is the third lesson of the Acts passage. The meeting with Christ brings a discontinuity in one's history and with one's culture which, paradoxically, liberates one into all the world. One learns that one is in the world but not of it. The early Christian epistle, *Letter to Diognetus*, comments that one who follows Christ is at home in all the nations of the world but

also an alien and a stranger in all lands. In our time Karl Barth has underlined this essential truth.

In the Acts passage, Peter fiercely clings to his Jewish dietary habits. When he feels hungry, God sends him a sailcloth filled with non-*kosher* creatures. God tells him to kill and eat. Peter cries out, 'No, Lord, no. I have never eaten anything profane or unclean.' God replies, 'It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean.' Peter puzzles over the meaning of this and then Cornelius' messengers arrive and Peter sets forth—breaking another of his culture's laws by entering a Gentile's home. Cornelius, after he becomes a Christian, will break in an important way with his Romanness.

This raises the fourth issue of the Acts passage. Peter does not convert Cornelius to his faith. The spirit of God, Christ, calls Peter forth from his limited cultural understanding of Christ and through the historical meeting with Cornelius, *both* Peter and Cornelius are transformed. *Both* meet Christ and *each* is transformed by God in Christ. Peter's understanding of Christ is as much deepened and changed as is that of Cornelius. All too often a Christian views evangelism as converting another person to his or her 'religion'. Rather, the encounter, which always occurs at a specific moment in history and in a specific cultural context, helps the Christian clean up his or her limited understanding of Christ and Christianity and leads the Church into a deeper understanding and awareness of just who Christ is.

This concept is beautifully summed up in two quotations, each of which comes from South Asia. A. G. Hogg was a famous Scottish Presbyterian educator-missionary to India. For more than thirty years he served at Madras Christian College, part of the time as principal. At the famous 1938 International Missionary Council Conference at Tambaram, where the college is located, Hogg wrote :

In its worst form proselytism is the effort to get persons to join our party because it is ours. In its best form it is the effort to get persons to join our party because we ourselves believe it to be the right party. Evangelism, on the other hand, is the effort to bring people to the feet of our Divine

Master, leaving it to *Him* to tell *them* whether to join our party, or some other party, or no party at all.²⁶

The second quotation comes from D. T. Niles, a Methodist from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) who was one of the remarkable group of South Asian Christians who founded, in 1947, the pioneering Church of South India. While I was a student in 1961 at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, I heard D. T. Niles say the following :

To be evangelists is not an undertaking to spread Christianity. It is rather to be caught within the explosion of the Gospel. Christ is at work and in his working we are caught, impelled, given until we become part of the lives of those to whom we are sent. Then we find that since we meet one another in Jesus, not only am I given to my neighbour but he is given to me and we are comforted together. An evangelist who in the process of evangelism does not learn more about Jesus Christ from the situation to which he has been sent is not engaged in evangelism. He is engaged in propagating Christianity, which is a very different occupation.

Each of these quotations succinctly reflects the fourth lesson of Acts 10. Our Christ and our religion are too small, too limited. It is only as Christians go forth into the world as servants of Christ mixing with all persons and all cultures and all histories, that their micro-Christi will have the opportunity to be crucified. Then these limited views will have the opportunity of being resurrected as larger and truer visions of Christ.

Evangelism : Colossians 1 : 15-20

No matter how much history and culture are stressed in this interpretation of Acts 10, I always feel the passage, for all of its insight, retains too great a flavour of individualism, of one-on-one evangelism. Paul's letter to the Colossians, verses fifteen through twenty, corrects this by stressing just who Christ is. Here one discovers the 'cosmic Christ', through whom 'every thing on

²⁶ A. G. Hogg, 'Evangelism : Its Meaning' in J. R. Mott (ed.), *Evangelism for the World Today*, Harper & Row, 1938, p. 22.

earth was created, not only things visible but also the invisible orders of thrones, sovereignties, authorities, and powers . . . and all things are held together in him Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe in himself’ In this passage Christ is the *Logos*, the active creating, integrating, reconciling power of God, he is the ground of all that is. Christ is present in all created things, in all humans and their institutions (including their religions), in all time and history. Christ is present where all genuine creativity and love and truth and justice are present.

This is precisely one of the reasons why the neo-conservatives are heretical. From the days of the early Church to the Alexandrian fathers, right up to Hogg and Niles, Christ has been viewed in this way. We do not need to ‘take Christ’ to India as *Today’s Mission* contends. He is already there creating, redeeming, and integrating. The Christian task is to discover him in the midst of India and all cultures, to uncover him and to aid him in his task of reconciliation. One does this by researching the past histories of civilizations and also by participating in his continuing creation.

This emphasis on the necessity of participating in current struggles for reconciliation and justice is the greatest strength of the secular liberationist position. The neo-spiritualists are often too lost in disembodied faith to be concerned about concrete justice and the neo-conservatives usually feel spiritual salvation obviates any need for material improvements. In a fascinating correspondence, which took place between M. M. Thomas and neo-conservative Donald A. McGavran, Thomas argued that being Christian influences every aspect of culture. McGavran disagreed,

For example, I don’t care how Christian they become: two acre peasants in the tropics are likely to continue to cultivate their fields barefoot and 1000 acre wheat farmers in Canada to cultivate their’s shod and riding in tractors. But the difference is of no substance.²⁷

²⁷ Donald A. McGavran in M. M. Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogues*, Madras: CISRS-CLS, 1977, p. 153.

There is no recorded reply from Thomas but for the Christian the difference would seem to be of great substance. If the Canadian farmers and the tropical peasants are both Christian (and even if they are not) it is the continuing task of the Church to build a human bridge between them and to ameliorate the material inequities which divide them. Shoes and tractors may not be crucial but a greater global economic justice certainly is.

In defining and clarifying this struggle for justice, my old *guru* Reinhold Niebuhr has given aid. Niebuhr knew that in a sinful world justice was always imperfect but he urged Christians to strive toward a 'tolerable justice' composed of a balance of order, equality, and freedom. If treated as absolutes, each of these conflicts with the others but in every situation one should attempt to balance these three and achieve at least a tolerable justice. Christian encounter and evangelism is not complete unless it seeks to identify Christ and cooperate with him in the struggles for justice, integration, and reconciliation that are going on all over the world.

The more time I spend in bouncing between India and America, the more I realize how similar the Christian task is in both cultures. Paganism, to use Bishop Newbigin's term, lives within Christians and their Church in both countries, and the Christians in both countries live in pagan societies. This paganism need not be denied or be the cause of despair; Christ is present in it also. The task of Christian evangelism and encounter remains one of emptying one's self into cultures, correcting them and being corrected by them in return.

Two years ago I was invited to a suburban Presbyterian Church in the American South to speak on Islam. It turned out to be an exciting adventure because the Church's publicity had been unexpectedly excellent and the congregation was composed not only of white suburban Christians but a large number of Black Muslims from a mosque in a nearby city. (It is now estimated that there are 2,000,000 Black Muslims in America.) After the service the Imam of the mosque and the pastor met each other. The pastor is very enlightened and the Church had been active in much social activity, including hosting some Vietnamese refugees. Not too

long afterwards, I received a letter from the pastor's wife. It read in part :

Which brings me around to the problem I'm wrestling with. The refugee family care just amounted to a supremely demanding job, even though we're glad we adopted them. It *was* a risk and we *did* lose members who disapproved Three Muslims visited our Sunday School class about a month ago and declared, in a very tactful and loving way, that their purpose was to work together with us in love. Now, what should I do ? Should we return the visit ? How to establish communication without losing more members, or should we just take another risk ? Very few WASPs know of the large Muslim presence, nor would we if it hadn't been for you. I'm very concerned about fighting fear and first-hand information and contact are the only way Any suggestions you have would be very welcome'

A remarkable letter from a remarkable woman.

This pastor, his wife, and the congregation face the problem and opportunity that Peter was confronted by, and that all Christian congregations around the world face. This congregation can move out into meaningful dialogue with its black brothers and sisters in the risk of faith. The encounter with these Muslims will change, at least to some degree, the congregation's vision of Christ. Or they can remain in their own ghetto, worrying about membership rolls and their clean white Christ. It is never easy to link the explosion of the Gospel with the exploding histories and cultures of today's world. Yet this is precisely the task of evangelism, of the encounter of faith with faith.

THEOLOGY OF JANATA (PEOPLE): A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE IN CHOTANAGPUR

NIRMAL MINZ

'Theology of Janata (People): A Tribal perspective' appeared in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, Dec. 1982. By its very nature, the scope of discussion in it was limited to the sufferings, struggles and aspirations of liberation, of the tribal people in Chotanagpur region. In that article there is a hint that the liberation of Tribals is not possible by isolating them from the remaining other indigenous people. Quoting from the same article, 'Therefore a theology of liberation in Chotanagpur must be undergirded by the actual working out of a process of reconciliation between communities which make up *Janata* in the total sense of the term,' (p. 43).

(1) Personal involvement in and experience of sorrows and sufferings of Janata (people) in general

The following is a brief account of first hand experience and understanding of *Janata* (people) in general in Chotanagpur. Gossner College, with Arts, Commerce and Science regular degree programme was founded in Nov. 1971 in response to the felt need of the Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and other Backward Communities of the region. The college pledged itself to serve primarily the weaker sections of society. Conscious and concerted efforts were made in the recruitment of lecturers and admission of students from the communities mentioned above. Our service and experience of twelve years in this college in a frontier situation where the church and the world meet, have taught us an important lesson. We have learnt through painful process that Tribals are just a small segment of the Weaker Section of our Indian Society. It has become quite clear to us that Harijans and most members of Backward Communities are in some sense even in worse socio-economic conditions than the Tribals. This conclusion was arrived at with the help of hundreds of incidents met with in the process of college teaching and administration.

Here are three examples. Student 'A' came for admission in first year commerce class with only Rs. 70. This amount was collected by him after selling his widowed mother's ornaments. She supports him and his two other brothers and sister by selling vegetables at street corners. He had no money to buy books and clothing that year. Knowing the actual economic condition of this candidate the college took the decision to return the amount of Rs. 70 to him and he was admitted without payment of any fee. The college provided him financial assistance throughout his four years of college and he graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree of Ranchi University. Student 'B' is the son of a rickshaw puller belonging to a Backward Muslim Community. His father pleaded for favour of admission of his son and prayed for financial assistance for him. Knowing his personal economic condition the college risked admitting his son charging a small amount of token payment. He was assured free studentship and so the candidate completed his Intermediate Arts from Gossner College. Student 'C' is a Dafaly sub-caste of a Backward Community. His parents could not afford to send him to college. He earned money by giving tuition to three children of his rich neighbour. His earning enables him to meet his food expenses alone. His case too was sympathetically considered and he got admission with a nominal fee of Rupees five and all his class fees were waived by the college administration. These are only three examples. Out of a total strength of 4000 young boys and girls enrolled in the college, more than 80 per cent of them pay their fees in three to four instalments. Only the remaining 20 per cent can pay their admission and class fees all at one time and regularly. This means that the college runs with a great financial strain due to its pledge to serve the weaker sections of society.

Poverty among the Tribals, the Harijans, and Backward Communities can be fathomed by statistical calculations. But the social and cultural deprivations and degradations suffered constantly by them cannot be measured. By sharing their sorrows and sufferings one can experience this dehumanising condition. We have had the good fortune of sharing the pains and suffering of *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur as we have been serving them through the college education. As a Tribal Christian we ourselves have had the experience of financial difficulties and social degrada-

tion. Now we can say that Tribals, Harijans, Backward Communities and other Backward Communities in Chotanagpur share the same socio-economic predicament as over against the caste hierarchy in power. The Chamars, Mehtars, Ghasis, Nais, Telis, Kumhars, Ahirs, Lohars, and Kurmi Mahtos to mention a few Harijan and Backward Communities in Chotanagpur, are under similar socio-economic injustices and they suffer the oppression and exploitation by the high caste in power.

The personal contacts with young people and their parents and guardians have given us enough evidence of *vedna* (acute physical, social and economic sufferings) and *heen bhavana* (feeling of socio-psychological depression and hopelessness) among the *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur. The *Janata* (people) here are in the same socio-economic condition as those in Korea described by Hyun Younghek. 'They are the ones we call the people with *han*', he says. 'Han is a kind of amassed and unresolved sense of resentment against injustice suffered. The people with "*han*" are they who have suffered injustices for generations (historically) and as a class (socially). They feel that the whole world is against them and thus it is hopeless. They are the ones who are deprived of human dignity and thus dehumanised'. (Hyun Younghek; 'Do you love me?' *C.T.C. Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 1, April 1982, pp. 2 + 3).

The *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur have been driven into the socio-psychological condition of *heen bhavana* (depressed and become hopeless) in themselves. This is the result of many generations of social and economic exploitations they have suffered in the past. The same socio-economic exploitative structures continue even now under the popular national Government at the Centre and in the States. The disintegration of indigenous regional political party, and consequent failure of political liberation so far have shattered the hopes and dampened the aspirations of *Janata* (people). Many thinking men and women of Chotanagpur are disillusioned about the future of *Janata* (people). This frustration has deepened in the process of a search for identity and human dignity by Tribals separately on one hand, and the Scheduled Castes and Backward Communities on the other hand. They have tried to do so by making alliance with different social, religious and

political parties and organisations. In this process the *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur are divided and split into bits and pieces. Politically some belong to the Jharkhand Party, some to Lok Dal, others to Congress (I) and still some others to Bharatiya Janata Party. They are divided into four major religious Camps—The Sarna (Tribal religion), the Hindu, the Muslim and Christian. The higher caste and vested interest groups would like to keep the *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur divided. Such a condition of *Janata* (people) gives the oppressor and exploiter more advantages over them.

The *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur have become the victims of progress in the literal sense of this term. Foundings of heavy industries in their homeland—Jamshedpur, Bokaro, Hatia, Rourkela and other places took away thousands of acres of land from them. These industries by and large have done more damage than good to *Janata* (people) of Chotanagpur. The Koelkaro Hydro power project and the other national projects in this region have not proved beneficial to the *Janata* (people) here. The rapid industrialisation and the influx of outsiders and all the evils accompanying this movement in Chotanagpur have shaken the very foundation of the identity and dignity of *Janata* (people) in this region.

Life under the present corrupt Government at the Centre and State, particularly in Bihar, has become insecure and future quite uncertain for the people of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and Backward Communities in Chotanagpur. The indiscriminate firings and deaths of Tribals in Mandar in June, and Mahtos in Ichagarhe in October 1982, the increasing atrocities on Harijans and Tribals in this area have brought the *Janata* (people) here to a hopeless situation.

(2) A New ray of hope

A couple of years ago a bright young friend in a high Government post remarked that the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur and Tribals in particular had no hope of their future identity. We maintained in conversation with him that for a Christian there is always hope; even in the face of death, there is the hope of resurrection. So also *Janata* (People) represent a primal reality which

continues through change and decay. This bed-rock reality called *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur cannot be deprived of hope completely. Some individuals, and some groups may be completely overwhelmed by the factors and forces which appear to have devastating affect on *Janata* (People) at present. But the *Janata* (People) never give up hope of their future deliverance and liberation from their present bondage to suffering and exploitation. The vision of life confirms such life sustaining attitudes and insights of *Janata* (People) around us. It is true that divided among itself *Janata* (People) will fall, but a united *Janata* will always work with hope to overcome the present socio-economic and political predicament in future. Such is the case with *Janata* in Chotanagpur also. There are signs of hope among them.

The search for socio-cultural solidarity in the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur is a genuine and valid attempt to face the present challenges confronting them. Emphasis on language, culture and history of *Janata* (People) is a hopeful sign. Here again the vision of Gossner College as a means of gaining identity of *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur is worthwhile mentioning again. The college pioneered in teaching the language and literature of the weaker sections in the region. It became the mission of this institution to provide an academic programme which gave self-respect and dignity to the young men and women, and through them to the *Janata* in general. The teaching of Mundari, Kurukh (Oron), Kharia, Ho, Santhali, Kurmali and Nagpuri (Sadani) language and literature at Intermediate and Degree level in the college is one of the most important tasks of this institution. A persistent effort to promote this idea, and to move the Government of Bihar to open the Postgraduate Department of Regional and Tribal Language and Literature at Ranchi University took a lot of patience and perseverance. Finally the Government agreed, and since 1980 June this Department was established. The Director and head of this Department is Dr. Ram Dayal Munda. The Senate of Ranchi University has decided to open the regional and Tribal department in the colleges under Ranchi University. Today the languages and literature of *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur have gained an academic status. This enterprise has effected solidarity between the various communities mentioned above.

Gossner College gave a lead in reviving the folk dance and music of *Janata* (People) here. Promotion of this cultural tradition again led the communities to come closer together, share the gifts and resources of one another in the process of growing together in developing the art of facing life with song and dances. Songs with new themes are being composed and sung. This is bringing a new consciousness among the young and old of *Janata* regarding the problems and possibilities of their present and future. Concerns for new and similar themes are developing in composition and performance of song and dance in the *Janata* (People) at large. Cooperation and fellow feeling is cutting across petty differences and artificial boundaries created by the common enemy of the Caste and Class set up in the region.

Writing the history of *Janata* (People) by the members from *Janata* (People) point of view and a programme to teach and study history from this point of view is another recent attempt in the search for solidarity. This plan is already underway. Dr. Kumar Suresh Singh, Virotham, and other historians are in the committee engaged in this project. A new self-understanding with human dignity and self-respect will be propagated among the young college and university students through this programme. There is a plan to conduct workshops on study of *Janata* (People) history in Chotanagpur. Such undertakings need time and money, but when the *Janata* is awakened to take up this task and when there are friends and well wishers around *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur, nothing is impossible. Resources in terms of personnel for this task are there. The *Janata* (People) lack material resources and physical facilities for such an enterprise. They hope to pool all resources together to complete this challenging and felt need programme. The intellectuals and scholars belonging to the various communities of *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur are drawn closer together due to this undertaking.

The promotion of language, literature and culture, and teaching of history from *Janata* (People) point of view is working as a cementing force between and among the various communities of *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur. A cultural revival seems to be shaping providing an opportunity for sharing the joys and sorrows and inspiring them to face the present disintegrating situation prevailing in the region with new vision and courage.

Two minor events are token of an undercurrent movement of solidarity among the communities of *Janata* (People). First, there is a proposal to establish a 'Chotanagpur Santhelpargana Akademi' at Ranchi. Two meetings have already been convened under the convenership of this writer. The founding of an Akademi of the kind mentioned here would take the *Janata* (People) a long way. It will become a centre of Literary and Cultural development of *Janata* (People) by *Janata* (People). Second, there is a move to make the *Ol Chiki* (Santhali Script) as the Script of all regional and Tribal languages in the region. There are difficulties on the way, but the very fact of consciousness of and an attempt to promote the idea of one script for all is praiseworthy. Achievement in this direction will enable the communities within *Janata* (People) to overcome gaps between them.

(3) Two major options on the way to solidarity

The socio-cultural values and their promotion are signposts for a more solid and organised life for the *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur. The socio-cultural ideals and models must be worked out, in order to establish a firm foundation for a self-sustaining life of *Janata* (People) at present and in future. At this level two major processes are already at work tempting the various communities of *Janata* (People) to join them. These socio-religious models are: (1) Sanskritisation and (2) Missionisation. The members and communities of *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur are opting consciously or unconsciously either for Sanskritisation or Missionisation. Time has come when they critically examine and analyse both of them and decide in favour of one or the other for the future of *Janata* (People). If they find neither model helpful for their future meaningful existence and identity, they should have the freedom and courage to opt for a third and viable model.

(i) *Sanskritisation model of solidarity*

The Sanskritisation process is a socio-cultural and religious change from a lower to the so called higher social status. In Chotanagpur this process has been working at least from the 16th Century A.D. The old temples at Jagannathpur (Hatia) and Chutia go back to an even earlier time. Hindu influence began with the incoming of Brahmin *Pandits* in the Darbar of Nagbansi

Raja in Chotanagpur. But their real influence on *Janata* began with the establishment of the temples mentioned above. This process has taken a systematic shape during the Independence movement and after India became independent it has been accentuated and accelerated. The Adimjati Seva Mandal, the Harijan Seva Samaj, launched by great national leaders like Desh Ratna Rajendra Prasad, Thakkar Bappa, and Mahatma Gandhi helped give a respectable status to Sanskritisation. The present missionary campaigns of Shankracharyas with Centres at Manoharpur and Kuru, the Banbasi Vikas Ashrams at Lohardaga and other important Centres are agents of promoting the Sanskritisation process among the *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur. The Tribals, Harijans, Backward Communities are being reminded by them that they all are Hindus and belong to the Hindu fold. Their age-long neglect was a mistake of Hindu leaders. The socio-educational programmes run by these agencies or the development of *Janata* (People), and religious indoctrination of children, in schools and ashrams are systematic attempts to introduce the various communities in *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur to the Hindu way of life. This basically means solemnisation of rites of passage—from birth to death by a Hindu *Pandit* instead of the old traditional *Pahan* or *Pujari* of the community. Marriage to be solemnised by a *Pandit* is supposed to be more respectable than the traditional marriage. Giving up beef-eating, adopting vegetarian food, and the worship of Shiva and Shankara, participating in celebration of Ram Naumi, Durgapuja festivals and others are some of the ingredients of Sanskritisation among the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur. Some elite groups of Tribals, Harijans, and Backward Communities feel it their privilege to be Sanskritised. They feel proud about it and look down upon many who are still leading their traditional life. The glamour of Sanskritisation has allured many and it is an ongoing process among the *Janata* (People) of our concern. Even an organisation like All India Adivasi Vikas Parishad founded under the able leadership of late Sri Kartik Ornon is working under the impact of Sanskritisation.

An objective and critical review of Sanskritisation is essential for the life and health of *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur. One must ask some basic questions. Is Sanskritisation leading to the fulfilment of *Janata's* (People's) hopes and aspirations for them-

selves? How is Sanskritisation promoting the identity and self-respect of *Janata* (People) in this region? In answer to these and other such questions one must make the following observations. Sanskritisation is destroying the identity of *Janata*, and it has no capacity to fulfil their aspirations. Their language, literature and culture are looked down upon and they are encouraged to use Hindi as their mother tongue. The socio-cultural values of *Janata* (People) are being replaced by Hindu ethics and morality. Inequality of men and women, and hatred for manual labour are injected in the minds and hearts of the young Tribals, Harijan, and Backward Communities. Above all Sanskritisation is officially initiating them in the lowest rung of Hindu Caste hierarchy. Through the Sanskritisation process no Tribal or Harijan can attain the status of the Brahmin. Therefore a dehumanising process now continues to operate from the rear instead of from the front. The unjust socio-economic structures and even religious discriminations continue in a more polished manner. The elite of *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur are used as instruments of exploitation and oppression by the agents of Brahminism in this region. Professor M. N. Srinivas, one of the leading social scientists in our country makes the following observation on Sanskritisation of Tribals and lower castes in India. He says, 'Sanskritisation does not always result in higher status for the Sanskritised caste and this is clearly exemplified by the untouchables. However thorough going the Sanskritisation of an untouchable group may be, it is unable to cross the barrier of untouchability'. (M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*, p. 58.) This leads us to the conclusion that social and economic liberation of the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur is not possible through Sanskritisation. It rather leads to further official bondage to Brahminism which cannot be opposed after accepting Sanskritisation. This state of existence is even worse as *Janata* (People) forfeits its right to oppose something which is not healthy to its life in future. It is quite clear then that *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur cannot and should not opt for Sanskritisation as a model of solidarity among them.

(ii) *Missionisation as a model of solidarity*

Christian missions from Germany, England and Belgian began their work from 1845. The establishment of schools, hospitals

and health care centres, organising congregations of those who accepted the Christian religion have continued among the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur. Missionisation is a process of rejecting the old, and accepting the new way of life as presented by the Western Christian missionaries in the institutions and mission compounds. Going to the church rather than *Sarna* (sacred grove) and temple for worship on Sundays, adopting individualistic ethics and morality in social behaviour, celebrating Christmas and Easter festivals, and using the *padres* for solemnising rites of initiation baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial ceremonies are missionisation. The missionised persons and groups develop an attitude of leaning on the foreigner and are dependent on money from abroad. An inner allegiance to the one far away overseas more than the next door neighbour develops in the process. The missionisation process tends to cut off the missionised from their own socio-cultural history. The name Jesus Christ becomes the guiding force in the missionisation process at the deeper level.

The missionisation of *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur (particularly the Tribals) has some positive values for maintaining their identity and self-respect. The missions are the first and foremost agencies which promoted the language and literatures of *Janata* (People) in this region. In fact that missionaries like Fr. J. B. Hoffman, Rev. Alfred Nottrot, Rev. Ferdinand Hahn began to give the Tribal languages a written form. They produced literature in the language of *Janata* (People) for their own use. The translation of Bible and part of the Bible in Mundari, Kurukh (Oraon), Nagpuri were done by the missionaries. In the beginning missionisation meant honouring and helping to fulfil the aspiration of *Janata*. This gave rise to Chotanagpur Tenancy Act to restore alienated lands and protect it from further alienation.

Missionisation is one of the major reasons for the Sardar Larai and Birsa movement in Chotanagpur. This meant that missionisation through teaching and preaching the message of Jesus Christ awakened consciousness in *Janata* (People) to fight for their socio-economic freedom and identity. But this awakening has an individualistic focus which comes out very clearly in their supporting the individual ownership of land system proposed by the English Government at that time. This fundamental orientation in missioni-

sation cut at the very root of socio-economic foundation of *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur.

Missionisation has a devastating effect on the solidarity of *Janata* (People) at present and will have in future if the present trend continues. It splits a community into at least three or four groups which become antagonistic to one another as Christian denominations. It creates a fundamental split or gap between the *Girja* (Christian) and *Sarna* (Tribal), *Girja* and Temple and Mosque, already present among the *Janata* (People). The change of faith results in social and cultural gaps between the missionised and the remaining population of *Janata* (People)). Missionised communities in Chotanagpur lead an alienated life with an official and organisational allegiance and loyalty to bodies outside India. Therefore the missionisation process has an inherent weakness and deficiency to support and promote the programmes to achieve socio-economic and political identity of *Janata* in Chotanagpur. This became obvious in Sardar Larai* and Birsa movement**. The alien source of external power of missionisation cannot ally itself with *Janata's* (People) indigenous aspirations and their fulfilment. The local agency of missionisation is the organised church with schools and hospitals run mostly with the help of foreign money. The organised church commands considerable power within itself but it has no inner ability to go against the Government of the day. It is always for the *status quo* which is the most oppressive agency and instrument today in relation to fulfilment of *Janata's* (People's) aspiration to be the subject of their history. Therefore in the last analysis, missionisation cannot help *Janata* (People) to gain identity and solidarity for the task of liberation. The Birsa movement illustrates this point and leads us to think of a third alternative for *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur to think about and decide to opt for it in future.

* Sardar Larai—a socio economic movement was launched by the Christian and Non-Christian (Sarna) Tribal leaders during 1885-1890. They fought for reclaiming their land from *Zamindars* and Rajas, and even from the British occupation in Chotanagpur.

** Birsa movement—Birsa Bhagwan emerged as the messiah of Sardar Larai in 1890s and led the freedom movement against the *Zamindars*, and British Government. His rebellion was crushed by British military power and he was imprisoned and died in 1900 at Ranchi.

(4) Humanisation as a process of achieving *Janata's* (People's) true identity

Our conclusion to set aside Sanskritisation and missionisation model for solidarity and identity of *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur has a serious consequence to face. We arrive at almost a dead end in our attempt to deal with Theology of *Janata* (People) in general. This experience is not an isolated one. There are many conscientious, concerned members of Tribal, and Backward Communities who are trying to find their way through. These are those who have rejected the Sanskritisation or missionisation option for themselves and their respective communities in Chotanagpur. We have personal contact and knowledge of at least a few of them. They are trying their best to find resources in their older traditional society and culture. But those resources and values seem to be so pushed into the background, and no modern interpretation of those values are available for them to lean on. They are searching for a new ideology and structure of socio-cultural life which will enable them to organise their own personal and social life in a meaningful way. In fact they have challenged us many times to evolve a model acceptable to *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur.

Humanisation both as a model and process is the third alternative for the *Janata* (People) in this region. Humanisation in general means promotion of human values, the equality of men and women, men being treated as persons and not as things ; the building of economic structures which helps to promote human values and does not work against it ; a political structure that allows freedom of human expression, and mitigates the exploitation of persons, groups, communities by other persons, groups and communities.

The dehumanising forces have worked so long and therefore affected so deeply the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur that the innate *Jana Shakti* (People's Power) has become almost dead. It is dormant and needs awakening and activating. Precisely at this point the function of Christian *koinonia* is urgently needed in Chotanagpur. The organised church and mission has no ability to play the role of *koinonia* envisioned here. This would be seen

principally as the calling of the Christian action groups with two-fold tasks :

(i) To construct the indigenous forces—to surface the historical memory of the people—and to draw attention to the times and forms in which the *Janata* (People) asserted their own subjectivity and to use these as the dynamic for shaping the present for a hopeful future.

(ii) To explore more fully the relationship of Jesus with the people, and recover the theological symbols and language to the Gospel which would speak to energise the people to move out of their predicament.' (*CTC Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3, May 1981, p. 15).

The *koinonia* brings with and within itself—the great motivational force—the *Jivana Shakti* (the life giving power)—Jesus Christ. This becomes possible by *Jivan Shakti's* association with *Jana Shakti* as Jesus and *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur are inseparable reality. The *Jivana Shakti* in Jesus is prompting the *Jana Shakti* to awaken and begin to organise and reconstruct the indigenous forces in the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur.

The indigenous forces in the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur are very prominently present, though in a dormant state, in the tribal communities in this region. These indigenous forces or values are : Equality of men and women in society, community, ownership of means of production and distribution for the common good ; dignity of labour ; and facing life with song and dance. These statements sound too leftist but they are not drawn from any left wing political party's documents. These human values are entirely inherent to the tribal community in Chotanagpur. In the present context of the so-called mainstream of Indian society inequality of human beings, private ownership of properties, and uneven distribution of produced goods, hatred for labour, are dominant. In this context humanisation means re-establishing the equality and worth of persons, breaking the economic and political structure of exploitation and oppression, and reintroducing the dignity of labour among the *Janata* (People) in Chotanagpur. Here faith with ideology will enable the *koinonia* with *Janata* to act. Creatively and ideology with theology will keep the hope open in future.

Jesus treated men and women with tremendous respect and value ; he worked as a carpenter and hence gave dignity to labour and his followers; after they formed a community fellowship in his name, they held all properties in common and the distribution of goods was made to each according to one's need. The human values upheld by Jesus Christ, and the social and economic structure evolved by his followers in the beginning of community correspond with the indigenous social and economic values and structures found among the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur, particularly among the Tribals as mentioned above.

'On several occasions Jesus expressed his indignation against the Jewish leaders (organisation and Roman political order), but he was never angry or annoyed with people. He had only compassion for them in their condition of need, hunger, sickness and, helplessness. Jesus was a man of the people and lived with the people.' (T.V. Philip, 'Jesus with people', *C.T.C. Bulletin*, Vol. 2 No. 3 May 1981, p. 10.) The compassionate Jesus is the *Sathi* (friend) and *Sevaka* (servant) of *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur. In His sacrificial love for people by his death on the Cross he has shown the way to true humanisation in Chotanagpur. Jesus has said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has annointed me to preach good news to the poor, to set free those in bondage ; open the eyes of the blind, and set at liberty those who are oppressed', (St. Luke 4 : 18). The possibility of humanisation in Jesus is, ever greater to be realised by the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur particularly in the light of his Nazareth manifesto. The Christian *koinonia* as action groups in Chotanagpur, have to be obedient to be instruments in the hand of God and act with the *Janata* (People) of Chotanagpur in realising their goal to be the subjects of their history in the face of many obstacles like *jati*, *Artha*, *Dharma*, and *Rajariti Shaktis* prevalent among them.

MARX'S CONCEPT OF TRANSCENDENCE : SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

POULOSE MAR POULOSE

ANY serious thinker with concern for humanity will admit that Marxist humanism influences one-third of the world's population. No one can condemn outright an ideology which sustains so many men and so many nations and which constitutes the hope of so many of the oppressed and the exploited. It is essential, therefore, that we Christians meet the challenge of Marxism in a positive way. In this study we shall consider Marx's concept of transcendence and its implications for the life of the Church. The thesis of this paper is that the Church needs a view of transcendence which is not identical with a particular metaphysic, but which leaves man in free play within the reality of his historical existence. It is hoped that Marx's own understanding of transcendence would be of help to the Church in recognizing the historical reality more seriously.

I

The crucial point and the very essence of Marx's critique of religion is not its denial of God, but the affirmation and acknowledgement of human autonomy. The thesis of religious belief that man is God's creature is countered by the statement that man is his own maker. This is the source of the Marxist picture of history and of man, with all its political and moral consequences. This critique of religion, and the element of atheism implied in it, is therefore an integral part of Marxist conception of the world.

Marx criticizes that the idea of God, the Creator God, bars man's endless future and impoverishes man's perspectives, endeavours, and struggles. He emphasizes that human creativity cannot reach its term in God, that is, outside man. He does not accept the Christian conception of man as *ens creatum* which begins and ends with God, the source of all human actuality and potentiality. Viewed in this way, for Marx, God is the end of the possibilities

which are the breath of our being. Thus we can say that Marx's critique of religion is not primarily and essentially a revolt against God, but rather a struggle on behalf of man in all of his personal needs and social relations. As it was pointed out by Olof Klohr of Jena in his lecture '*Wissenschaft und Atheismus in marxistischer Sicht*', at the symposium on Atheism in Vienna, May 21-22, 1965, 'The atheism of Marxism is, in essence, not the "No" to religion and God, but the "Yes" to the world, the "Yes" to the conscious formation of human life.'¹ Marx is not out to get rid of God; he is to free man—not to free him from God but from himself and from his enslavement to religion, which is his own creation. It is not God but the belief in God which must go, if man is to be free.

Thus at least theoretically Marx does not see the destruction of religion as an important aim. The disappearance of religion will be the normal outcome of a rational thinking and rational living. Man's ultimate task, as Marx sees it, is self-creation which man accomplishes by creating a world. The world which man thus creates is so rich that there is no room left in it for belief in anything but man himself and his world. It is a world in which authentic humanity is guaranteed and gradually achieved in the material, moral, cultural and intellectual spheres.

Marx never uses the term *Transzendenz*, but always *Aufhebung*. Translators have rendered the term *Aufhebung* in various ways. The verb *aufheben* literally means 'lift,' 'raise,' 'hold up,' etc. It has also two opposed meanings. First, it can mean 'abolish,' 'suspend,' 'repeal,' 'annul,' 'cancel,' etc. Second, it can mean 'heep,' 'preserve,' 'store away,' etc. It was because of this double meaning (negative and positive) Hegel used this term in his *Logic*,² where it has been translated as 'transcend.' Marx uses the term in a similar way. According to him, transcendence means not only abolishing the dehumanizing conditions of human life but also preserving the true essence of man and shaping his own destiny by going beyond the given. This, of course, fits with the literal meaning of the word 'transcend'—'to rise above' or 'to go beyond the limits.'

¹ Cited by Erwin Hinz, 'Toward a New Interpretation of Religion and Atheism in the Secular Society,' *Lutheran World*, Vol. 13, 1966, p. 379.

² Cf. Vol. I, trans. by W. H. Johnston & L. G. Struthers New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961, pp. 119f.

Marxist philosopher Jaroslav Krejčí defines transcendence as 'consisting essentially in endeavours and activities aimed at going beyond the given reality, the world as it is, overcoming it practically, conceptually and ideologically.'³ It is in this sense Marx employs the term transcendence, because transcendence perpetually opens the way for the future. However, he does not regard this opening of a new future as an incursion of the divine into human history, as in religion. Marx conceives transcendence as a dynamic human reality, as a self-transcending formation of the meaning and values of our life, as an active, real, and not merely, theoretical, crossing of the frontiers of human power, freedom, culture and perspectives. By transcendence Marx means the movement of the living and humanly experienced present into the future. This transcendence which is man's openness to what is to come, unlimited openness, is in Marxism a human project in a definite historical situation, a human choice to remain open to the future as limitless human dimension, an absence of any final boundary. This choice and project form the content of the present fight for the future, including the political struggle.

The concept of transcendence has so far not been sufficiently elaborated theoretically in Marxist philosophy. The primary reason for this lack of interest is that Marx himself did not systematically develop the concept of transcendence *per se*, though it was fundamental to his thought and lifework. Secondly, many Marxists have often been reluctant to use the term, for the term transcendence poses certain problems. Traditionally, the notion of transcendence is related to belief in a world beyond, and it has some irrational and supernatural connotations. In religion, for example, according to Marxists, transcendence denotes the illusion of an absolute and static plenitude of moral ideals, justice, freedom, love, etc.⁴ But for Marxists, transcendence is the actual human experience that man, though belonging to nature, is different from the things and animals and that man, since he is able to progress always, is never complete. This claim to transcendence is crucial to the understanding of Marx's critique of religion. Since

³ Jaroslav Krejčí, 'A New Model of Scientific Atheism,' *Concurrence*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1969, p. 87.

⁴ Cf. Roger Garaudy, 'Faith and Revolution,' *Cross Currents*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1973, p. 35.

Marx himself has not developed it, we shall examine this important concept by using an indirect method—by means of a study of Marx's humanism.

By humanism Marx means the doctrine that affirms the value and dignity of man. It takes on a more precise meaning inasmuch as it affirms that man is an end in himself, and that he consequently rejects any form of servitude that would reduce him to a means at the hands of an owner. The decisive productive force of history is man himself at work in all the spheres of his creative activity: in production, discovery, invention, artistic creation, political and moral decisions. This is why Marx says that the driving force of history is within history itself. History is not made from outside, neither by a destiny such as Greek thought posited, nor by a providence extrinsic to human activity, nor by Hegel's 'Absolute Spirit.' Marx valued more highly than anything else the initiative of human beings in history. In 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' Marx stresses this point: 'Men make their own history.'⁵ Man is always something other and something more than the sum of the conditions which have produced him. This is what distinguishes him from other kinds of animals.⁶ Otherwise we should be relegated to an existence determined solely by instinct. Echoing the Italian philosopher Vico, Marx pointed out that man was not responsible for the evolution of nature but for his own-history.⁷

Marx also believed that the advent of real man is the goal of history, which can be attained only by revolutionary action. But, what is this 'real man?' First of all, he is a man related to nature. Nature is man's proper context. Nature and man interact; nature produces man but man produces nature by his labour. It is man's 'species-being' (*Gattungswesen*) that he is a builder and moulder of his world, so that the world is as much a product of his as he is of the world. As Marx phrased it, 'History itself is a *real* part

⁵ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, In one volume, New York: The International Publishers, 1972, p. 97.

⁶ Cf. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, New York: International Publishers, 1972-73, pp. 177f.

⁷ Cf. *Capital*, *op. cit.*, Vol I, p. 372 note.

of *natural history*—of nature developing into man'.⁸ Human history is the story of man's humanizing nature. Or, to put it another way, in man nature becomes human. If man is abstracted from his context, both he and his context are destroyed.

Secondly, man is a socially-active natural being, and not just natural being as such. The history of man in nature is properly realised only in the case of social man. Here is where nature and man are united by society ('the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfilment'⁹). As Marx put it, 'My *own* existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being.'¹⁰ Man is as he exists for himself as species. Species-being is in turn defined in terms of its life-activity: free and conscious activity on the objective world. In work (in society) man reproduces himself and sees his reflection in the world he has made. Human essence is therefore not some abstraction which inheres in each individual.¹¹ It is the concrete web of relations which is actualized in human social existence.

Thirdly, human self-consciousness (in social activity) is seen as the theoretical form of that being whose living form is the community. Man's spiritual faculties and intellectual operations are simply the theoretical expression of his real being as man. Any abstraction from this reality—man as a homeless spirit, as an animal, as a kind of God, etc.—does not refer to real man at all. Marx does not deny that men are, of course, individuals. They do think individual thoughts. Men are born and they die as individuals. But the referent of the term *human* as opposed, say, to *animal*, is to man as he is 'the subjective existence of thought and experienced society for itself.'¹² Man is what he is concretely: in society in nature. This is his uniqueness and dignity.

This portrait of man is the basis of Marx's humanism. Any form of social structure that negates this man must itself be negated.

⁸ Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Edited with an Introduction by Dirk J Struik, Translated by Martin Milligan, New York: International Publishers, 1971, p. 143. Hereafter cited as *Manuscripts*.

⁹ *Manuscripts*, p. 137.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Cf. Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach,' *On Religion*, Introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr, New York: Schocken Books, 1971, p. 71.

¹² *Manuscripts*, p. 138.

Since man was, and is, the maker of himself, since he alone makes history, he bears full responsibility for what becomes of him and history. As Walter Hollitscher observes,

Anyone who will have it that the world in the ordinary sense of the word is 'ruled' from above, or that man's lot is 'predestined', comes . . . into contradiction with the responsibility which morality presupposes.¹³

Here we find the basic meaning of the liberty and autonomy claimed by modern man.

But Marx contends that the liberty of men is not yet an accomplished fact. Man is deprived of liberty, enslaved and made an instrument. In other words, man is alienated. Alienation is defined with reference to the ideal, complete man, man as he ought to be, man as free. Man is alienated means, more precisely the following: (a) He is not what he ought to be (privation), (b) There is lacking in him something of his very self (mutilation), (c) He is estranged from himself and from reality (estrangement), (d) He identifies himself psychologically with an imaginary existence which becomes a substitute for reality (identification), (e) He is torn by a conflict between his real essence and his ideal essence (contradiction), (f) He is reduced to a means, to slavery (enslavement).¹⁴ The process of overcoming alienation is the process through which man becomes what he ought to be, attains his ideal essence, seeks and again finds himself, repossesses that part of himself which had been seized from him, resolves the contradiction within him and reaches liberty. It is this unceasing process which Marx calls 'transcendence' (*Aufhebung*).

In *The Holy Family* Marx wrote that the proletariat

cannot free itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life. It cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing *all* the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation.¹⁵

¹³ Walter Hollitscher, 'The Logic of Atheism,' *Concurrence*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1969, p. 78.

¹⁴ Cf. Guilio Girardi, *Marxism and Christianity*, trans. by Kevin Traynor New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968, p. 23.

¹⁵ Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. by R. Dixon, Moscow: Foreign Language Press, 1956, p. 52.

Abolishing all the inhuman conditions of life of society, and thus humanizing his relation to the material world and nature, man will transcend all forms of alienation. Religion and State are only partial expressions of the one fundamental alienation of man from nature and are bound to disappear simultaneously with their cause. But a religious or political emancipation alone can never liberate man. The religious critique merely fights the consciousness of man's alienation and leaves the roots of alienation intact. His mistake lies in the assumption that ideas are independent of the social conditions of action and, consequently, that they can be changed without changing the conditions which produced them.¹⁶ This is what Marx means when he criticizes the atheism of his time : 'Communism begins from the outset... with atheism, but atheism is at first far from being communism ; indeed, it is still mostly an abstraction.'¹⁷ The same holds true for the political critique. Not political reforms but only a re-integration of man with nature can return him to his true essence. The key factor to the re-integration of man with nature is labour. Labour is the factor which mediates between man and nature ; labour is man's effort to regulate his metabolism with nature. Labour is the expression of human life and through labour man's relationship to nature is changed, hence through labour man changes himself.

The re-integration of man with nature will also restore the bond between man and his fellow man, for the humanization of nature is essentially a social task. 'Activity and mind, both in their content and in their *mode of existence*, are *social* : *social* activity and *social* mind.'¹⁸ The adjective 'social' refers not just to work done in immediate co-operation with others. Even the lonely task of the scientist is social, for the material on which he works as well as his personal life are product of the community. His consciousness is 'the *theoretical* shape of that which the *living* shape is the *real* community.'¹⁹ There is a mutual causality between man and society. The society which man creates through his

¹⁶ For 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.' Marx, 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', *Marx and Engels : Selected Works*, p. 182.

¹⁷ *Manuscripts*, p. 136.

¹⁸ *Manuscripts*, p. 137.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

work will in turn create him. 'Just as society itself produce *man as man*, so is society produced by him.'²⁰ 'Thus *society* is the unity of being of man with nature—the true resurrection of nature.'²¹

According to Marx, Communism strives for such a society, and hence he describes Communism as 'the *positive* transcendence of *private property*, . . . the real *appropriation of the human* essence by and for man; . . . the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being.'²² Most communist theories (e.g., Russian Communism) suppress private property by making it into common property. But such a solution still maintains the basic principle of private property: it considers material possession and not man's self-realization as the aim of labour. Marx criticized this kind of crude Communism in these words:

In negating the *personality* of man in every sphere, this type of communism is really nothing but the logical expression of private property, which is its negation. General *envy* constituting itself as a power is the disguise in which greed reestablishes itself and satisfies itself, only in *another* way. The thought of every piece of private property—inherent in each piece as such—is *at least* turned against all *wealthier* private property in the form of envy and the urge to reduce things to a common level, so that this envy and urge even constitute the essence of competition. The crude communism is only the culmination of this envy and of this levelling-down proceeding from the *preconceived* minimum. It has a *definite, limited* standard. How little this annulment of private property is really an appropriation is in fact proved by the abstract negation of the entire world of culture and civilization, the regression to the *unnatural* simplicity of the *poor and undemanding* man who has not only failed to go beyond private property, but has not yet even reached it.²³

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Manuscripts*, p. 135. By private property Marx does not mean the private property of things for use such as furniture, automobile, etc., but the property of the 'propertied class' (capitalists). Since they own the means of production, they hire the property-less individual to work for them, under conditions the latter is forced to accept. Thus the property-less individual is reduced to a means of production. Hence 'private property' is considered here as an expression of human self-alienation.

²³ *Manuscripts*, pp. 133f.

Private property should be suppressed not by making it common property, but by abolishing the alienation itself of which it is the expression. Through this positive transcendence of private property, the object of man's activity again becomes a human object. Man appropriates the world in a human way : his relation to it is no longer a means to an end outside himself but an expression of his entire being, in which he objectifies himself without losing himself. Nature becomes human and man becomes natural.

The transcendence of private property is therefore the complete *emancipation* of all human senses and qualities, but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have become, subjectively and objectively, *human*. The eye has become a *human* eye, just as its *object* has become a social, *human* object—an object made by man for man. The *senses* have therefore become directly in their practice *theoreticians*. They relate themselves to the *thing* for the sake of the thing, but the thing itself is an *objective human* relation to itself and to man, and vice versa. Need or enjoyment have consequently lost their *egotistical* nature, and nature has lost its mere *utility* by use becoming *human* use.²⁴

Man's objectification of himself in nature creates a genuine culture when he uses nature in a truly human way. When man's relationship with nature is truly humanized by the transcendence of private property, Marx believed, all expressions of estranged human life will disappear :

The positive transcendence of *private property*, as the appropriation of *human* life, is therefore the positive transcendence of all estrangement—that is to say, the return of man from religions, family, state, etc., to his *human*, i.e., *social* existence. Religious estrangement as such occurs only in the realm of *consciousness*, of man's inner life, but economic estrangement is that of real life ; its transcendence therefore embraces both aspects.²⁵

In religion, the content of transcendence is God, the transcendent future is the power of God which comes to humanity

²⁴ *Manuscripts*, p. 139.

²⁵ *Manuscripts*, p. 136.

and evokes a response. But Marx denies any sort of superhuman transcendence. He is reluctant to identify transcendence with God because he understands the absoluteness of God to function as a limit, a restraint upon the otherwise unlimited field of human possibilities. Dependence on a transcendent God and full human autonomy are incompatible :

A being only considers himself independent when he stands on his own feet ; and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his *existence* to himself. A man who lives by the grace of another regards himself as a dependent being. But I live completely by the grace of another if I owe him not only the maintenance of my life, but if he has, moreover, *created my life*—if he is the *source* of my life. When it is not of my own creation, my life has necessarily a source of this kind outside of it.²⁶

Echoing Aristotle, Marx says :

You have been begotten by your father and your mother ; therefore in you the mating of two human beings—a species-act of human being—has produced the human being. You see, therefore, that even physically, man owes his existence to man.²⁷

Thus the question of creation cannot even arise for Marx, because it conflicts with *praxis*.

We shall elucidate Marx's concept of transcendence with reference to one of the leading Marxist thinkers of our time. Roger Garaudy, who is well known for his sympathetic attitude toward religion, has pointed out that religion may have some practical justification :

Like every ideology, religion is a project, it is a way of breaking away from, transcending the given, of anticipating the real, whether by justifying the existing order or by protesting against it and attempting to transform it.²⁸

²⁶ *Manuscripts*, p. 144.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Roger Garaudy, *From Anathema to Dialogue*, trans. by Luke O'Neill, New York : Vintage Press, 1966, p. 76.

But this does not change his position on religion as a whole, for this transcendence must always remain within the immanence of human possibilities. According to him, 'transcendence is no longer an attribute of God but a dimension of man, a dimension of our experience and our acts.'²⁹ It is a totally human phenomenon, a 'dialectical supersession' of man by himself.³⁰ He further explains Marxist concept of transcendence in these words :

To liberate man from all alienation, material and moral, is to accomplish, within the continuing creation of man by man, a new decisive step towards increased hominisation, a step as important as the invention of the tool, through which the human branch broke away from the common trunk of animality by conquering consciousness. This new frontier of hominisation, making of every man a man, questioning and creative, will mark a new detachment from the earth. The detachment, this time, will be from all the alienations which have been crystallized for thousands of years and have become so thoroughly customary as to seem to us like a *given* nature, like earth itself. It will free the spiritual energies of each man and of all men with such force that it is absolutely impossible—for us who are caught in the alienations of our pre-history—to imagine their nature and their use. This future, open on the infinite, is the only transcendence which is known to us as atheists.³¹

Thus the difference between religious (to be more precise, Christian) and Marxist concepts of transcendence is this :

For a Christian, transcendence is the act of God who comes towards him and summons him. For a Marxist, it is a dimension of man's activity which goes out beyond itself towards its far-off being.³²

Garaudy asserts that any attempt to refer transcendence to an absolute, to God, would be to limit man by imposing an antiquated worldview on him. To the Marxist, transcendence is

²⁹ Garaudy, *From Anathema to Dialogue*, p. 46.

³⁰ Cf. Roger Garaudy, *Marxism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. by Rene Hague, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970, p. 209.

³¹ Garaudy, *From Anathema to Dialogue*, pp. 93f.

³² Garaudy, *From Anathema to Dialogue*, p. 92.

actually a demand, an exigency, a driving force, but a force that cannot be conceived, named, or expected. Nor can it be hypostatized. As Garaudy put it :

To investigate the dimension of transcendence, conceived not as an attribute to God but as a dimension of man, is not to start from something which exists in our world in a vain attempt to prove the existence of what can exist only in another world ; it is simply to investigate all the dimensions of human reality.³³

Man is an incomplete being, a creature in the process of formation. The goal of this self-creation is an ever fuller social consciousness, a more complete social integration, and an absolute domination of the physical world. In other words, the exigency of which Garaudy speaks is future oriented—it is the demand for an ever more complete realization of the potential of man.

Here, then, is the sum and substance of Marx's concept of transcendence : The moment nature gave birth to man by a 'spontaneous generation'. It became essentially related to him, to be humanized by his free activity. Nature and man are no longer two powers in opposition to one another, but two terms of one relation. Through a vital interplay with nature man makes himself. Unlike other animals which are passively determined by their material environment he actively transforms nature and adopts it to his own needs. Thus man rises over all other animal species and begins an historical evolution. Here we have a qualitative leap, a real outgrowing, a 'transcendence' in the strictly etymological sense of the term. The future to which he is moving is completely open to man. He shapes the universe and his own destiny, and thus he is not any more the object of history but its subject and agent. It is this possibility, which enables man to move towards the future along an original road that the animal was incapable of knowing—the road that entails freedom and choice—what Marx calls *Aufhebung*, which we might translate 'transcendence'.

³³ Garaudy, *Marxism in the Twentieth Century*, p. 104.

II

The problem of transcendence has been one of the most critical issues in Christian theology. Traditionally transcendence and immanence have been viewed diametrically opposed to each other, perhaps with an undue emphasis on their incompatibility. The former was taken to express God's otherness and distinctness from man, the latter his presence with and freedom for man.³⁴ These ideas have commonly been expressed, especially in much of medieval theology, in spatial language, though medieval thinkers insisted that the spatial language was only analogous or metaphorical speech when referring to God's presence. One of the rather obvious and unfortunate features of the history of theology has been the tendency to go to extremes in stressing either the immanence of God at the expense of his transcendence, or *vice versa*. If the nineteenth century liberal theologians concentrated on immanentism, the neo-orthodox theologians of twentieth century so stressed God's sovereign transcendence that any sense of His presence in the world was almost lost.³⁵ The problem of transcendence remains *casus belli* in Christian theology even today.

The interest in understanding and interpreting transcendence is found not only among Marxist philosophers and Christian theologians, but also in other intellectual communities. Culture analysts, psychologists, sociologists, and others who probe the content and the dimension of human society have worked diligently to define the concept of transcendence.³⁶ According to them, transcendence aims at total life fulfilment. They acknowledge

³⁴ It is to be noted here that the two terms 'transcendence' and 'immanence' and two other terms often used in the same context—'super natural' and 'natural'—are not to be found anywhere in the Bible, though many passages could be cited as illustrating what these terms mean.

³⁵ The stress on transcendence among neo-orthodox theologians is not without justification. Theologians like Karl Barth emphasized transcendence in order to warn the church in a moment of crisis of the dangers of immanentism. Barth, however, has corrected this emphasis especially in his book, *The Humanity of God*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974. Barth's position is that the transcendent God has drawn near to us in Christ, and this gives us the right to speak about him.

³⁶ See, for example, Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America*, New York: Random House, 1970; and, Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

that human life is not all that it can be, and they attempt to devise ways to bring about total human fulfilment, using the categories appropriate to their individual scientific discipline. Transcendence means therefore the concrete resolution of social, economic, and political problems as well as spiritual and psychic wholeness. Thus the desire for wholeness is understood as a basic human characteristic.

Whatever may be the definition of transcendence given by these secular thinkers, the objective is the same : to bring into being that which the human condition demands, i.e., the perfection of being. And it is more or less the same objective which contemporary theologians intend with their affirmations about the being of God and the nature of his activity in human history. When contemporary theologians speak of transcendence, their language is very much analogous to that of the humanists and other secular thinkers referred to—though it is not quite the same. They approach the problem of transcendence in various ways : to reform the doctrine of God, to announce his death, to reduce theology to anthropology, or even to accept a pluralism of theistic and non-theistic beliefs in the church.³⁷

Generally speaking, the quest for the understanding of transcendence demonstrates that the critical issue for theologians is not to attempt a description of the nature and being of God but instead to attempt an exposition of the consequence of God's activity in human history. In other words, when theologians affirm faith in the transcendent God of the scripture, they are affirming faith in the God who has acted in human history to make man whole and to redeem him from his sins. Transcendence is not just the description of the inner metaphysical being of God.

³⁷ The following works will provide helpful hints in understanding the direction in which the contemporary debate on transcendence is moving : David Cairns, *Go Up There? A Study in Divine Transcendence*, Edinburgh : The Saint Andrew Press, 1967 ; Edward Farley, *The Transcendence of God : A Study in Contemporary Philosophical Theology*, Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, MCML VIII ; Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind : The Renewal of God-Language*, New York : The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1969 ; William A. Johnson, *The Search for Transcendence : A Theological Analysis of Non-theological Attempts to Define Transcendence*, New York : Harper Colophon Books, 1974 ; Alistair Kee, *The Way of Transcendence : Christian Faith without Belief*, Baltimore : Penguin Books, 1971 ; and, *Transcendence*, ed. by Herbert W. Richardson & Donald R. Cutler, Boston : Beacon Press, 1969.

Rather it refers to an event, that historical event witnessed to in the scriptures, which brings about the restoration of health, i.e., reconciliation, to humanity. As William Johnson suggests, 'Transcendence has little to do with the nature and attributes of God but has everything to do with the consequence of God's activity in history, that is, to introduce a transcendent dimension to human life.'³⁸

This trend in contemporary theological thinking is indeed commendable. As André Dumas pointed out 'Transcendence runs the risk of exiling God outside of reality, and of debasing the worth of creation as a second rate imitation of the true realm of essences.'³⁹ It is obvious, then, that in order to keep faith in a transcendent God who lies beyond history, and yet acts within it, we should struggle with the structures of evil which still triumph scandalously in the here and now. None of the vital challenges posed by emerging social forces like underdevelopment, injustice, exploitation, and new demands for total human liberation can be met by postulating answers in a world to come. Therefore it is high time that the church interpret its concept of God, hope in that God, and the ethical teachings in such a way as to allow its members to plunge fully into history. Like others Christians need to be historical if they are to conquer their full humanity.

By calling religion an ideology, Marx implies that it provides a transcendent escape for the victims of the class struggle and thus deadens their revolutionary passion for changing their existing order. This is a challenge Christianity must meet. If we examine Marx's critique carefully, we will recognize that its most important argument is the fact that Christianity, during its almost two thousand years of existence, has failed to do away with poverty, servitude, wars and social disorder. Christians have betrayed their mission in the world. They have allowed their faith to be used to support the powerful against the weak, to become a weapon against the small, contributing to their bondage. There is, indeed, much truth in the provocative statement of Martin Luther King, Jr. : 'How often the Church has been an echo rather than a voice, a taillight behind . . . secular agencies, rather than a headlight

³⁸ William A. Johnson, *The Search for Transcendence*, p. 151.

³⁹ André Dumas, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality*, trans. by Robert McAfee Brown, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968, p. 116.

guiding men progressively and decisively to higher levels of understanding.⁴⁰ We cannot erase easily these facts from the history of Christianity. In the face of these facts, there can be little doubt that Christianity itself has been one of the major causes of oppression in the modern world. We can learn from these past mistakes, and in a spirit of deep humility and penitence before our God acknowledge the guilt of past generations which clings to us who strive today to bear the joyous message of Christ. Christianity must ever be on guard lest it give grounds for the suspicion that it is cultivating an ideology which can be exploited by the ruling classes.

Any theory, any idea and philosophy, can be understood in its essence only if we understand the concrete situation in which it originated and if we relate it to our concrete circumstance of life. But the truth of the matter is, very often we Christians forget that an abstract interpretation of prophetic and apostolic message deprives the divine word of its real meaning and relevance. We also forget that the Word of God can be adequately understood and interpreted only in its vital relation to our present human situation. Marx's concept of transcendence reminds us that theory must correspond to life needs.⁴¹ This means that religion must arise from the actual life experiences of modern man and not be dogmatically imposed upon him. Theory and practice must be unified, which involves seeing Christian concepts in their development out of historical experience, and discovering the deeper meaning of the Gospel message by using it to change society. It is with this historical and social consciousness Paul Tillich gave the clarion call to Christians to engage in social action :

The Kingdom of God is not a static heaven into which individuals enter after death ; it is the dynamic divine power in and above history which drives history toward ultimate fulfilment. It refers to groups as well as to individuals, and demands continuous efforts toward justice, which is basic in it.⁴²

⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, New York : Harper & Row, 1963, p. 98.

⁴¹ Cf. 'Theses on Feuerbach,' especially theses I, IV and XI, *On Religion*, pp. 69ff.

⁴² Paul Tillich, 'How Much Truth is there in Karl Marx?', *Christian Century*, Vol. 65, No. 36, 1948, p. 907.

To be a Christian is not just 'to serve God,' but it is also a dynamic social ethic, a service to mankind. We may not agree with Feuerbach when he says that theology is anthropology; but we have to admit that there is certainly much anthropology in theology. Although Christianity is directed to the 'beyond', it nevertheless must influence our actions in the realm of the 'here below'. It must give a deeper meaning to our bond with the world and with history. Solidarity with the agonies and problems of modern man become the sacrament of God's serving presence in the midst of the world.⁴³ Christians cannot escape into a false mysticism or an illusory transcendentalism, where the affairs and needs of their brothers are left 'here below'. It is true that Christians do look beyond the terrible realities of the 'here below', but this is not to evade them or to render them illusory. Rather, by loving and serving men, they prepare for the Lord's *parousia* in the very act of love for their brothers. As Christians, we are always human beings, and human dignity and endeavours must always be of supreme importance. In this sense there can be no radical division between believer and atheist. Marx's concept of transcendence challenges Christians for a vision of man rooted more deeply in reality. It exhorts Christians to act out the implications of man made in the image of God who has become incarnate. It reminds the church of the real concern of the Gospel. The true renunciation of ecclesiastical privileges, a giving up of the gifts of the church to the world, therefore, correspond to the central movement of the Gospel, the path of God to man, i.e., the saving renunciation of the Son of God on behalf of the world.⁴⁴

⁴³ Cf. Matthew 25 : 36-40.

⁴⁴ Cf. Philippians 2.

SEARCH FOR AN ECCLESIOLOGY IN ASIA*

T. V. PHILIP

ONE of the major problems in the ecumenical movement today is the different, sometimes conflicting, views about the Church itself. Roger Mehl, a French Protestant theologian, wrote recently, 'At the present time the divergences between Catholics and Protestants, which in the 16th century concerned the whole of the Christian message, no longer concern more than a single chapter of doctrine-ecclesiology'.¹ Ecclesiology is the central issue on which divergences between churches are focused at present.

The purpose of this paper is to trace briefly how some of the ecclesiological understandings were developed in the course of church history and thus to give a certain historical perspective to our ecclesiological discussions in Asia.

We do not find any one particular ecclesiology developed in the New Testament. Jesus did not teach any model of the Church to be followed by those who believed in Him. St. Paul used a number of different metaphors and images to denote the Christian community. As the Church approached the second century, there was no uniform development in structure, theology and practice of different Christian groups. The concepts of orthodoxy, catholicity and apostolicity, whether in terms of its self-understanding or in terms of its theology, structure and practice, were not a presupposition with the early Church. These concepts and ideas were developed in the course of time and in the context of challenges and conflicts, both from within and without, and in the context of the Church's missionary encounter with its contemporary world. Christianity in its early history was a movement of change, adaptation and development and was not bound exclusively to its origin; the development was not uniform in all places.

* Part of this paper was read at the C.C.A. Consultation on Ecclesiology in Asia, held in August 1982.

¹ Quoted by Yves Congar, 'Trials and Promises of Ecumenism' in *Voices of Unity*, World Council of Churches, 1981, p. 32.

I

Church : Catholic and Universal

In its origin, Christianity was a Jewish sect, though a dissenting sect, it shared the particularism and ethnic understanding of the Jewish community. Yet, the Christians were also aware that something new had happened in Jesus Christ. The tension between the Old and New in the Church resulted, in the first century itself, in an identity crisis and came to a focus in the Jew and Gentile controversy. The controversy was not simply over the observance of certain dietary laws or over circumcision. For Paul, who fought the cause of the gentile Christians, the controversy raised a fundamental question regarding the salvation in Christ and the nature of the Christian community. For Paul the Christian Gospel was not simply a fulfilment of the Jewish law, but in that fulfilment something radically new was brought into being. In Christ, a new creation has happened. In Him, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, bond or free. Paul could not accept Christ without abandoning the Jewish concept of the Church as an ethnic or racial or caste community. There can be no Church on the basis of nationality, race or colour.

The expansion of Christianity among the gentiles meant that the unity of the Church based on or coincident with the ethnic or racial homogeneity of the Palestinian fellowship of Jewish Christians was radically questioned. The mission of the Church in the world always creates tension in the Church and questions the accepted understanding of the Church's nature and structure. It was in and through this conflict, and in its demarcation and separation from Judaism, that the early Church understood the inner meaning of the universality of the Gospel and the catholicity of its nature. It was something like a 'discovery' as the Church was engaged in mission. The result of the Jew and Gentile controversy was that Christianity passed from what was apparently a sect within Judaism to an independent universal religion; the basis of its membership was faith in Christ. The Church has no national home or centre in contrast to Jewish dependence on Jerusalem, but it is at home everywhere. In its life there is an unconditional inclusiveness *vis-a-vis* man. The Church is the sacrament of the unity of mankind. The churches in Asia will be catholic to the extent that race,

colour, caste and national prejudices and segregations are historically conquered and separations based on them are done away within the life of the churches. Catholicity is not a status symbol of the Church safeguarded by any ecclesiastical structure ; it is primarily a relationship and a task. It emerges in mission and manifests in the openness of the Church to humanity in Christ.

When the early Church crossed the borders of Palestinian Judaism and entered into the wider world of Graeco-Roman culture and religions, another significant development happened in its understanding of the nature of the Church and its mission. The Jews had a very negative attitude to all that was pagan, as they believed that God had elected them to be an exclusive nation uncorrupted by heathen influences. The first Christians being Jews, shared the Jewish attitude to pagans and Roman society in general. But when the Church entered into the wider area of the Graeco-Roman world, it found itself in the midst of a religiously and culturally pluralistic society and the question of Church's relation to pagan society and culture became a crucial theological question.

The attitude of the Christians in general to pagan polytheism and idol worship was absolutely negative. But a creative encounter took place between Christianity and Greek culture and philosophy. In this there was no one tradition universally followed by all Christians. While Tatian and Tertullian took a negative attitude to philosophy and culture, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and several others applied themselves to reconciling the achievements of pagan culture and philosophy with the demands of the Gospel.

Philosophy in the second century was a way of life and not merely a way of thinking about metaphysical questions. Christianity, if it were to influence the lives of educated men, had to take philosophy seriously. Justin Martyr in the second century considered himself as a philosopher and he defined Christianity as a new school of philosophy. He wrote, 'Christ is the *logos* of whom every race of men partakes and those who lived rationally are Christians even if thought to be atheist Whatever things have been rightly said by any one belongs to us Christians'.²

² *Second Apology*, p. 10.

Clement of Alexandria believed that the idea of God is implanted in all men at creation. There is a spark of nobility in every soul which is kindled by the divine *logos*. All wisdom is summed up in Christ who is the uniting principle. 'There is one river of truth, but many streams fall into it on this side and that'. Some Christians of Clement's day, who criticized Greek philosophy, argued that Greek philosophy was stolen from Moses or from heaven as Prometheus stole fire. Against them, Clement asked: 'Is not fire beneficial? We must always judge by what is said, not by who said it.'

Because of this positive attitude, the church fathers were able to use Greek philosophy and culture not only to express Christian faith but also for a deeper understanding of it. In its encounter with Greek culture, the Church no longer understood itself as a Jewish sect living in a semitic milieu, but a universal religion which can find its home in all cultures. In its missionary encounter with Graeco-Roman culture, the Church grasped the universalism of the Gospel which meant its ability to express itself in all particular situations. The universality of the Church means that it finds its own form and expression in each situation and in each age. This is the basic element in the Christian tradition. Harnack in a significant statement points out:

But the reasons for the triumph of Christianity in that age are no guarantee for the permanence of that triumph throughout the history of mankind. Such a triumph rather depends on the simple elements of religion, on the preaching of the living God as the Father of men and on the likeness of Jesus Christ. For that very reason it depends on the capacity of Christianity to strip off once more any collective syncretism and unite itself to fresh coefficients.³

To be universal, therefore, means a plurality of Christian expressions in structure and theology. Plurality is something inbuilt in the very nature of the Church because it is an essential element of the Gospel itself. J. Danielou points out,

³ Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, (second edition), Vol. 1, p. 318.

The transition of the religion of Christ from the Jewish world, within which it made its first appearance, to the pagan world is the great revolution that occupies the first and second centuries. This was the natural outcome of the very nature of the Christian message, which is not the religious expression of culture, as were the great pagan religions, and not the election by God of one people for an historic mission, as was Judaism, but is the proclamation to all mankind of the advent of 'last things'.⁴

As Danielou mentions, this was a great revolution in Christian thought. If the missionary encounter with Greek culture forced the early Church to rethink not only the meaning of the Gospel, but also the meaning of Greek culture, and philosophy for the wholeness of the Church's life and mission, a similar process needs to take place in the life of the Asian Churches in their search for an ecclesiology. If only a real encounter and dialogue takes place between Asian religions and cultures and Christianity, the churches in Asia will come to understand the meaning of its universality. With regard to India, S. Rayan writes :

This means that a deepening reflection in religious pluralism will be an important factor in the life of the Church in India. We have to keep pondering on the variety of spiritual experiences and religious expressions held in honour of the Indian scene Exploration of the meaning and possibilities of pluralism must continue, and a corresponding plurality must grow and mature in the Church . . . let a hundred flowers bloom and let plurality of theologies, faith formulations, worship forms and ecclesiastical structures shape up and emerge.⁵

It is only within the process of encounter and dialogue and reflection on the variety of religious experiences and expressions in the Asian soil, that the meaning of the universality of the Church's nature will be clarified for the Asian churches.

⁴ Jean Danielou in *The Crucible of Christianity*, (A. Toynbee, ed.), p. 275.

⁵ S. Rayan, in *The Church A People's Movement*, N.C.C. of India, p. 18.

Church of the Spirit versus Church of the Bishops

In the third century, two divergent ecclesiologies began to develop in the western Church which left a permanent mark on subsequent developments.

The early Church was an eschatological community proclaiming the advent of last things. The coming of the Holy Spirit was an eschatological sign and the Church understood itself as a community in the Holy Spirit. Prophets were highly regarded and speaking in tongues was not uncommon. But towards the end of the second century, the prophets were more or less replaced by the episcopate and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in terms of prophecy and speaking in tongues was becoming rarer and rarer. The Church was becoming institutionalized under monarchichal episcopacy and had already begun to develop the marks of a Catholic Church in terms of an institutional structure, in other ways than the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the daily life of the Church. To validate the Church's existence in its conflict with heretical teachings, especially with Gnosticism, the Church looked increasingly, not to the future illuminated by the Lord's return, nor to the present illuminated by the Spirit's extraordinary gifts, but to the past illuminated by the composition of the apostolic canon, the creation of the apostolic creed and the establishment of the apostolic episcopate. The 'apostolic authority' began to be considered as norm for the Church's life. In this way the apostles became a sort of spiritual aristocracy and the first century a golden age of the Spirit's activity. The promises of the New Testament on the coming of the Holy Spirit, were primarily referred to the Pentecost event, and only through that event *via* the apostles to subsequent ages⁶ Hence the search and development of channels of continuity with the apostolic age began to take place in the Church. This was the background of the ecclesiological controversies in the third century.

The Montanist movement, which arose in the second century and became very influential in the third century, radically questioned the institutional development in the Church. The

⁶ J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 107.

Montanists viewed the Church as a community of the Holy Spirit, living in the immediate expectation of the *parousia* and as a community of the saints separated from the world. They opposed everything by which the Church acquires a permanent and rigid institutional form for the purpose of settling down in this world.

In the third century, there arose a controversy between Bishop Callistus of Rome and Hippolytus over the question of discipline in the Church. By the end of the second century, it was generally accepted that the Church could not and should not forgive those who were guilty of murder, fornication or apostasy. Hippolytus accused Callistus of showing laxity in discipline. According to Hippolytus, Callistus had declared that no sin was unforgivable and that as bishop he had the apostolic right to forgive all sins. Behind the question of discipline was the question about the nature of the Church. Is the Church to remain a company of elect on earth, hedged around with taboos of purity? Or is the Church a school of sinners? Again a similar controversy arose in Rome after the Decian persecution in the middle of the third century and spread to North Africa. After the Decian persecution, the question naturally arose about the re-admission of the lapsed, back into the Church. In Rome, a party under Novation stood for rigourism refusing any reconciliation of the lapsed, and threatened to break communion with those who received them. The question was again about the nature of the Church. Novation argued that the scriptures preclude the forgiveness of men of idolatry which is a sin against God. The Church which contains the apostates and allows their reconciliation ceases to be holy and hence ceases to be the Church. He further argued that the ministry and sacraments of the Church containing apostates have no validity and its ministers are no longer Christian ministers.

For the Montanists, Hippolytus and Novatian, the world is evil and Christians are separated from this world and are a community of saints. Their life style is maintained by the observance of rigid moralism. On the other hand, for Callistus and others, the Church is a school of sinners bound together by a sacramental life and administered by an ordered ministry. To support their position, they quoted the parable of the wheat and the tares where our Lord told the men to leave the tares with the wheat till the

last day. They also used the typology of Noah's ark wherein were dogs, wolves, crows and all clean and unclean animals. For them the holiness of the Church depends upon forgiveness (already a penitential system was developing in the Church) rather than on the holiness of its members. But for the puritan party, the tares are outside the Church. The Church is the earthly Eden from which the backsliders are put out. It is the Bride of Christ (Virgin) without any spot or wrinkle, the assembly of those who live in righteousness. It is a congregation of saints whose holiness is guaranteed by an unconditional purity of its members. These controversies, which resulted in schisms, led to the emergence of two distinctive ecclesiologies.

The effect of these controversies on the official Church was that the institutional and authoritarian note was strengthened and the unity and Catholicity of the Church began to be viewed in terms of its hierarchical structures. This development is best seen in the writings of Cyprian of Carthage, in the third century. He drew a clear line between what is and what is not the Catholic and apostolic Church. For Cyprian, there is no salvation outside the Church. 'If any one could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, he may also escape who is outside the Church . . . he cannot have God as Father, who has not the Church as Mother'. According to Cyprian, outside the catholic Church, there is not only no salvation, there is nothing truly Christian; no forgiveness of sins, no Christian baptism, no Christian faith and charity and not even Christian martyrdom. The Church is a garden enclosed, outside of which no living water flows. Which is this catholic Church out of which there is no salvation? For Cyprian, it is the Church ruled by bishops in apostolic succession.

The bishop, by virtue of his being successor to the apostles, possesses priestly functions. The bishop is not only a ruler in the Church but the only ruler. He wrote, 'Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and if any one is not with the bishop he is not in the Church'. About Cyprian's ecclesiology, R. Seeberg remarks,

Henceforth the Church is no longer the holy people of God, holding in common the faith of the apostles, but is an association of men subject to the control of the bishop, whom he

tolerates in the Church, and this by virtue of his divine authority which has been given to him to pardon or retain sins.⁷

But outside the official body of the Church there were other groups like the Montanists or Novatians, who stood for a different principle.

They preferred enthusiastic movements of the Spirit to humdrum official Christianity; they believed that the Holy Spirit can make His own ministers where He wills, apart from the authorised methods of the Church; they repudiated the ministrations of the unworthy clergy; they held to the notion of the gathered congregation, the communion of saints, exercising a discipline which casts out the unworthy and they believed that the Church can be infected by unworthy members to the point of corruption and death.⁸

Of the two ecclesiological views of the third century, one is centred round the work of the Holy Spirit and the idea of gathered congregation; and the other was centred round the ecclesiastical hierarchy and sacraments. If we take Tertullian (in his Montanist days) and Cyprian as representatives of these two divergent ecclesologies respectively, then their statements explain the differences between the two views. Both Tertullian and Cyprian agreed that the Church is one and is visible and within which alone there are valid and efficacious ministry and sacraments. But the question was: Which Church? What is its nature? What constitutes the Catholic Church?

For Tertullian, the Church is not an institution discernible by the outward marks of an institutional continuity and authoritative officers in regular succession. The Church is where the Spirit is, made by the Spirit; its members are the spiritual men and they, as such, possess and exercise the privilege of the Church. This is not an invisible Church, but a group of Christians who are visibly spiritual, a congregation of the saints. Therefore, it is the true Church. The Church itself is properly and principally Spirit Himself. Therefore the Church will indeed forgive sins,

⁷ R. Seeberg, *A Textbook of the History of Doctrines*, p. 177.

⁸ S. L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church*, SCM Press, 1964, pp. 114-115.

but not by the Church of Callistus or by Callistus himself, but by spiritual men ; and not by the Church which is a collection of bishops.⁹

For Cyprian, the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop and the Catholic Church is the Church of the bishops in apostolic succession. For Tertullian, the Church is not a conclave of bishops but the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Both these divergent understandings of the Church continued throughout the history of the Church in different groups and in different forms. It was the ecclesiology of Cyprian which gained ground in the official Church. From the third century onwards, Christian writers began to use Old Testament categories of priesthood and sacrifice to Christian ministry and sacraments. Historically, there is a correlation between the development of the doctrine of sacraments and that of ministry. The more the Church interpreted Christian sacraments in terms of Old Testament sacrifice, the more the dignity and the power of the ministry, grew in the Church and *vice versa*. The Church came to be understood more and more in terms of the priesthood with the result that in the middle ages there was hardly any ecclesiology but only a doctrine of priesthood. So much so that Pope Boniface VIII could boldly assert that outside the Church there is neither salvation nor remission of sins and that submission to the Roman pontiff, is for every human creature, an utter necessity for salvation.

The Church as Christian Society

From the time of Constantine in the fourth century, we notice a gradual development of a new image of the Church, namely, Church as Christian society. After its precarious existence in the Roman Empire as a persecuted minority, when Constantine granted religious freedom and began actively supporting the Church, the Church was full of gratitude to God and to the Emperor. Eusebius went to the extent of stating a theology of the Christian Empire. He found a correspondence between religion and politics. According to Eusebius, polytheism goes with polyarchy and anarchy, and monotheism with monarchy and unity. With Constantine

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

the monarchy has come on earth as the image of monarchy in heaven. As Christ, the Word of God, the *logos*, is the archetypal image of the Father, so on earth, Constantine is the image of the *logos*. Constantine leads all the earth to the *logos*, prepares all men to His kingdom, calls all men to a higher knowledge and governs men below in accordance with the archetypal idea. There is no other universal authority in the world.¹⁰

According to Emperor Justinian, the State is divinely ordained. The Emperor has the supreme authority and responsibility for human society. The Emperor is God's vicar on earth and his will embodies divine law. In the divinely ordained state, the Church assists the emperor in the important task of providing for men's spiritual well being. Monotheism demands monarchy and the unity of the empire demands the unity of the Church. From the 4th century onwards, there was an increasing emphasis on the unity of the Church corresponding to the unity of the Empire. The Church became the Church of the Roman *oikoumene*. The catholicity of the Church began to assume the meaning world wide (i.e. extent of the Roman Empire). This is how Augustine, in the 5th century, interpreted catholicity which came to exercise a great influence in Roman Catholic ecclesiology.

As Church and State began to draw closer, the Church became more and more dependent on the State. The Church began to assume a political model and borrowed from the State many of its institutional forms. Bishops were not only Church dignitaries but also civil functionaries and enjoyed many benefits. As W.H.C. Frend points out,

As the Church expanded in wealth and numbers, offices and auxiliary duties multiplied. Clerics in a variety of minor orders were needed. The bishop of a large See was now a great officer of the State, paid 720 solidi a year like a provincial governor and expected as Gregory of Nazianzus complained during his short tenure of the See of Constantinople (380-1) to rival the Consuls, the governors, the most illustrious commanders to eat well and live splendidly.¹¹

¹⁰ See S. L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius I.*

¹¹ W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, p. 250.

In the 4th and 5th centuries the Church became the Church of the bishops. Though Church and State were very close, there was no identification between the two during this period. But in the period of early middle ages, the dualism of Church and State as distinct and autonomous societies began to blur, 'or rather it continued to exist but within one single society called the Church or from the 9th century onwards Christendom'.¹²

In the middle ages, the Church and State formed one society—a society in which the Empire would have the temporal side of society and papacy the spiritual side. But these powers were not in the world, but in the Church. The Church is the city or society and it is in the Church the two persons are leaders: the holder of the priestly office and the holder of the kingly office.¹³ Christian religion took on the collective sense of Christian society. Christendom or Christian society was described as the Body of Christ with the priesthood and Empire as its distinct organs. 'Christendom is the Body of Christ, it is also the city of God, a single city, though administered by two quite distinct powers, the spiritual and the temporal'.¹⁴

Though the place of two rulers were accepted in one city, there was increasing conflict between the popes and the emperors. The conflict between the popes and the emperors was not simply a quarrel over constitution but an ideological one. In this conflict, the papalist not only claimed a supremacy of the pope in spiritual matters but also to an equal degree over temporal matters. The papalist argued that just as the soul is superior to the body, in the same day, pope is superior to the emperor. Moreover, along with the idea of papal superiority over the emperor, there also developed the concept of papal world monarchy. Just as there is one ruler in heaven, there can be only one ruler on earth (Eusebius' theory of Christian emperor is now applied to papacy). It is only the Roman bishop who can be this one ruler in the world. The argument of the Canonists was:

For it was admitted on all sides that there was one God only, one heavenly ruler who shaped the doctrines of mankind.

¹² J. Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, London, Longmans: 1955, Vol. 1, p. 66.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Could any secular ruler claim to be God's vicar on earth? The pope alone of all living creatures was in a position to say of himself that he held the vicariate of God God has created everything and ruled over everything and consequently the divine government lay in the hands of His vicar.¹⁵

Walter Ullmann points out that some of the more extreme among the Canonists even went so far as to declare that the pope was not only God's vicar on earth, but also His successor.

If in the Constantine period, the State was the superior partner and the Church was in the State, in the medieval period, Church was the dominant partner and its society existed in the Church. In fact, there was no distinction between Church and State and between faith and culture. Feudal culture and Christian faith were badly mixed up. Christian society was hierarchically organized as in the feudal society of the time. By divine ordination, clergy were located on the higher rungs of the ladder. The soul of the Christian society was the clergy. It was they who had the power to turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The pope as the vicar of Christ was the absolute ruler of society. 'Animation and direction of the Christian society comes from the pope to the bishops to the other clergy to the people'.¹⁶ The unity of faith, sacraments and discipline formed the basis of Christendom. There was no room for any deviation from the teaching of the Church or for any theological and cultural pluralism. The spiritual power which was highly organized and centralized, kept a constant watch over discipline as a protection against schism, and over dogmatic unity as a protection against heresy. The development of inquisition was only the natural consequence. If Augustine interpreted the catholicity of the Church as world wide, it now received the meaning, not only of world wide, but also under the one monarchy of the Roman Pope.

The medieval development reached its culmination in the Council of Vatican I, when the council asserted that not only was the

¹⁵ Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Papalism*, London, 1949, p. 118.

¹⁶ Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments*, Fortress Press, 1976, p. 86.

Church a perfect society, but also that its permanent constitution had been conferred upon it by the Lord Himself.¹⁷

Avery Dulles points out that the notion of the Church as society by its very nature tends to highlight the structure of government as the formal element in society.¹⁸ In fact, this was what happened in the medieval Church. The Church tended to be identified with the clerical hierarchy. The hierarchy became the teaching, sanctifying and governing Church, while the people in the Church were only those who were taught, governed and sanctified.¹⁹ About this, Yves Congar states that the Roman Catholic ecclesiology has been marked by a tendency to regard the Church 'as a machinery of hierarchical mediation, of the powers and primacy of the Roman See, in a word, "hierarchology"'. On the other hand, the two terms between which the mediation comes, the Holy Spirit on the one side, the faithful people or the religious subject on the other, were as it were kept out of the ecclesiological considerations'.²⁰

It will be a mistake to think that institutionalism and clericalism are problems only in the Roman Church. This is one of the serious problems in all the churches in Asia.

Church as Community of Believers

It was in contrast to an over institutionalized and hierarchical Church of the middle ages, the Protestant Reformers of the 16th century spoke of the Church as community of believers. Though Protestant churches differ among themselves on certain aspects of the doctrine of the Church, they are agreed on the basic nature of the Church. When the Reformers stressed the Church as community of believers, the supremacy of the scripture over tradition, salvation by faith only and the priesthood of all believers, they had a different understanding of the Church than that of the medieval Church. Martin Luther wrote, 'Thank God a child of seven knows what the Church is—the holy believers and the

¹⁷ Once such an ecclesiology is accepted, then the task of the historians or Biblical scholars is simply to find ways of legitimizing the Constitution and teaching of the Church.

¹⁸ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Gill and Macmillan, 1977, p. 31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁰ Yves Congar quoted in *Models of the Church*, p. 33.

lambs who hear their shepherd's voice.'²¹ The Church is the congregation of believers where the Gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments offered in accordance with the Gospel. The Church is nothing else than the community or gathering of the saints and of the godly, believing men on earth which the Holy Spirit gathers, preserves and rules. Karl Barth explains that the Word of God is not a substance imminent in the Church, but rather an event that takes place as often as God addresses his people and is believed. The Church, therefore, is actually constituted by the Word being proclaimed and faithfully heard. The Church is the congregation that is gathered together by the Word—a Word that ceaselessly summons it to repentance.

For Luther, the Church of God is present wherever the Word of God is spoken, whether it be in the middle of Turk's land or the Pope's land or hell itself. 'If I were the only one in the whole world who retained the Word, I alone should be the Church.' Luther had no difficulty in agreeing with Cyprian that outside the Church there is no salvation; for outside the Church there is no saviour, and the saviour is only to be found where the Word is preached. The marks of the Church according to Luther are: Preaching, Baptism, the Sacraments of the altar, the power of the keys, the ordained ministry and suffering. All of them are bound up with the Word of God.

The Reformers' emphasis on the centrality of the Word of God in the life of the Church, was a great gain for Christianity. Though they repudiated papacy and the institutionalism of the medieval Church, they were not able to overcome the idea of the Church as Christian society integrally related to the political community. Soon the Protestant churches either became state or national churches or theocracies of some sort. The principle accepted at Augsburg (1555) was that the religion of the ruler would be the religion of the people. With their great emphasis on the freedom of the Christian, one would expect religious toleration on the part of the Reformers. But on the contrary, political power was used against the dissidents such as the Anabaptists.

²¹ Avery Dulles, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

The subsequent ecclesiological developments in the Protestant churches were very much conditioned and coloured by the idea of the Church as Christian society. Christian faith came to be more or less identified with doctrines and the unity of the Church was seen in terms of doctrinal uniformity integrally related to the territorial unity. In such an ecclesiology, there was no place for any cultural or theological pluralism.

Moreover, the Protestant ecclesiology is too narrow in its understanding of God's purpose for mankind and the Church's mission in the world. It is too inward looking, very much concerned with what happens in the Church and for the people in the Church. The sermon in the Church is set within the context of a recurring congregation and practically outside the urgencies of Church's mission. Reformers had to apply force to make people attend the Church so that they could hear the sermon. Is the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments alone the functions of the Church? What about the Church's ministry and mission in the world of politics and culture? 'The whole human race only seems to be the material for the election and gathering of the community of the saved, as if the mankind were for the Church and not the Church for the mankind'.²²

In the 19th century, when the Protestant missionary movement arose, in most cases, the missionary societies were organized outside the official churches, as no room could be found in the ecclesiologies of the Protestant churches for a mission outside Christendom. When it arose, it was the western colonialism which gave the ideological framework for missions and not the doctrine of the Church. For the Roman Catholics, world mission was not a problem, as the world monarchy of papacy provided the ideological basis. However, for both Roman Catholics and Protestants, the peoples in Africa and Asia were there for the missions to gather. Hence there was no proper recognition of the selfhood of the Asian or, African churches in missionary theology and practice.²³

²² J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, SCM Press, 1975, p. 67.

²³ A number of ecclesiological models have developed in the west in recent years. Some of those models are very helpful for our consideration. For a discussion of these models, see Avery Dulles, *The Models of the Church*.

II

Church as Participation

The ecclesiologies of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in the west were developed in a christendom situation where there was no society outside the Church or any room for religious or cultural pluralism. It was these ecclesiologies which the Asian churches have inherited through western missionary movements.

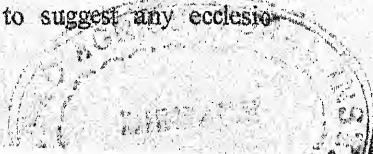
Asian societies are pluralistic societies, of religions, cultures and ideologies. The western missionaries in Asia, because of their ecclesiological understanding, were incapable of understanding or meaningfully relating to a pluralistic society. Their attitude to other religions, cultures or religious experiences was either to 'root out' or to compel them to 'come in'.

The situation of the early Church in the Roman Empire was very similar to, though not identical with, that of the churches in Asia. The experience of the early Church in a pluralistic society will be of great value to Asian churches. The Catholicity and Universality of the Church was not a theological concept for the early Church. It was a discovery and experience for the early Christians as they were engaged in mission and dialogue. This is something very similar to what is taking place in the experience of Asian Christians today.

Asia is not only a continent of many religions, cultures and ideologies, but it is also a region faced with enormous social, economic and political problems. It is within this context we need to undertake our search for an ecclesiology. The statement of K.H. Ting, that China after the revolution has found itself and the Church in China has discovered that it is a Church for China, points to a direction for our ecclesiological research. The emphasis of the Christian Conference of Asia on the Christian Community within Human Community and the present-day discussions on the theology of the people and the Church as people's movement, raise important questions for our considerations.

In this section, my purpose is neither to deal in detail with the ecclesiological discussions in Asia, nor to suggest any ecclesio-

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logical model for the churches in Asia, but only to point out a specific trend in Asian thinking.

In the history of Indian Christian theological tradition, for several reasons, there was no serious discussion of the doctrine of the Church. This could also be said of other churches in Asia. One of the reasons for the lack of ecclesiological interest was that the theology and organizational set up of the western missionary societies were such that Christian converts in India were considered belonging to the missionary societies and not to an Indian Church. The independence and the identity of the Indian Church was not recognized. Towards the end of the 19th century, under the impact of the national movement, when a consciousness of belonging to an Indian Church began to take root among Indian Christians, the questions that received serious attention were, independence of the Indian Church from missionary control, indigenization and unity of the Church. During the last thirty years, one of the major concerns in Indian was the mission of the Church. In recent years, the topics such as the identity of the Indian Church, theology of the people, and the Church as people's movement were raised.²⁴ Though there was no grappling with the doctrine of the Church as such in these discussions, we can identify certain common elements which point to a new understanding of the Church and its nature.

During the first half of this century, two of the most creative Indian thinkers were P. Chenchiah and V. Chakkarai, both laymen. Though their primary interest was in theology, their writings reveal certain ecclesiological understandings. For them, the Kingdom of God occupies central place in the Gospel and not the institutional church.

For Chenchiah, Christ represented a new stage in the evolution of man. He is the new man. We too can become the 'new man' if we become one with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The new creation in Christ is not confined to individuals; it is for the whole cosmos. The Kingdom of God represents the new order of creation. 'Kingdom of God is not a dream and has come in

²⁴ T. V. Philip, 'Ecclesiological Discussions in India during the last Twenty-five years', *The Indian Journal of Theology*, July-December, 1976, pp. 72-187.

our Lord's time. Kingdoms of God emerges out of the kingdoms of the world as the next stage in history.²⁵ How is the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God to take place? Chenchiah explains,

If you ask what the Kingdom of God is, one or two interesting things emerge. In the first place it represents a complete reversal of religious norms and aspirations. Men sick of earth longed for heaven, afraid of death, sought immortality. It was all one way traffic from earth to heaven. Kingdom of God turns all this upside down. While we are opening a road from earth to heaven, from man to God, kingdom of God opens a new traffic way. In that way God becomes man, heaven an epoch of earth. Neither God nor man fulfil themselves in their natural habitats. God has to become man and the prayer has to be Thy Kingdom come on earth.

We observe that the kingdom is a magic land where strange things happen. We have a double rhythm in a magic atmosphere—God turns into man in order men may become divine. Heaven has to catch up earth to realize itself. This two-way traffic has to be opened between the spiritual and the temporal, between the Church and the world. To get the most of ideas, they have to be supplanted from one place to another. *Aparigrah** has to be transplanted from the cloister to politics, communism has to be transplanted from the world into the Church. Church saves the world just when world saves the Church. They are each other's salvation. Life-blood must circulate, should travel from one lung to another.²⁶

The process of new creation means the humanizing of the divine and the divinizing of the human. The Kingdom of God stands for this order of transformation. The Kingdom of God is not simply a gift in the sense that it falls down from heaven. 'We reach the Kingdom of God by manipulating the forces of the kingdom of

²⁵ P. Chenchiah, 'A Christian Approach to Sarvodaya' in R. W. Taylor (ed.), *Religion and Society, the First Twenty-five years*; 1953-1978, Madras: CLS, 1982, p. 48 (see *Religion and Society*, Vol. No. 2, 1958).

* *Aparigrah* means renunciation.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

man. It will not be let down from the heavens full made like the new Jerusalem.²⁷ Hence the need to keep open the traffic between the spiritual and the temporal, between the Church and the world.

Chenchiah is very critical of the institutional church. Instead of helping the two way traffic between the spiritual and the temporal, the institutional church has fortified itself away from the stream of life by its dogmas and creeds and thus has become a stumbling block for the realization of the Kingdom.

Seeds imbedded in the credal formulas are like the sealed food placed in the coffin of Pharaohs. They are of no use to anybody, least of all to the indweller in the coffin. Taken out and sown in the English fields they gave a rich harvest. So, it is with many religious seeds of thought lying unproductive in the atmosphere of the Church. They await greater service in the regions beyond the Church walls.²⁸

For Chenchiah, the Church as it exists today is simply a social device for worship. It serves only this limited purpose as the temples and mosques do in Hinduism and Islam. 'Pastors are trained to conduct services as *pujaris* and *moulavis* are trained. The Christian goes to the Church for a traditionally ordained mode of getting emotional release.'²⁹ It will be a mistake to expect the institutional Church to solve social problems. What is necessary is to re-think the nature of the Church. 'The confusion between the ideal Church and the institutional Church works havoc in our thought world. Instead of "rethinking" the Church, we are making the institution of the Church a panacea for all our evils.'³⁰

The Church must be in the main stream of life in the world. It is where the Church takes place. He points out,

World is bigger than the institutional Church and God creates and solves problems in the stream of life. Church is after all a coming together of Christians. Men become Christians, where they do not inherit the religion, in the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

milieu of life not in the pews of the Church. Church does not create Christians but is the result of men becoming Christians.³¹

The Church is where the new creation takes place, where men became new men in the power of the Holy Spirit. It takes place, not in the pews of the Church, but in the stream of life, in the traffic between heaven and earth. The Church is the spirit filled fellowship of new creatures in Christ taking place in the midst of life situations. Hence Chenchiah suggests that Christians should develop 'nerve centres' all over life for differing purposes—for politics in the state area, for economics in the commercial area. 'The brain or brain lobe is the coverage of brain centres.' He wanted such groups to be called churches. 'Extend the term Church to all groups of Christians in all fields of life or regard it as an organ among other organs, for worship.'³² For Chenchiah, it is only such groups which will help in the transformation of the world and hence in the realization of the Kingdom of God.

According to V. Chakkarai, the Church is the Body of Christ constituted not by mere cults but by communion with the living Lord for social action. When we speak of Christians as the Body of Christ, it means that Christian *Bhaktas* should be the body through which the mind of the Lord should be carried out into the world. Hence Chakkarai rejects the understanding of the Church as an Institution or Organization. This does not mean that he has no need for any organ or institution to express the common life and witness of the Christians. In this thinking, the common life in the Lord is not expressed through one central organization or in any particular way. It is expressed through various organs and in a variety of ways. Jesus seems to have contemplated spiritual families—small groups of men and women, who have been regenerated by the spirit—who should be living centres of Christianity in the world. A big association like the Church disciplined by laws and dogmas, is not at all helpful for such a purpose. Chakkarai could conceive of local Christian congregations and several other fellowship groups existing outside the Church structure as being such centres of spiritual life and witness. His view

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

is, unless we discover the Church in this way, it will be impossible for the group life of Christians to permeate and regenerate the existing society. In a moving passage, he expresses his idea of the Church thus:

Here in India the Christian community is the Body of Christ. A common life will animate it ; the churches, the mutts, the evangelists, the gurus and schools will be the organs through which this common life will manifest itself. There can be no doubt that in this Pauline view, understood as we have done, lies the future of the Indian ecclesia. The Constitution of the Church in the West and its history have followed a different course ; and its career and its present position in the life of Europe are full of lessons for us today. We cannot be its imitators and camp followers. The Holy Spirit does not imitate but inspires It is not the externals of its organization, its magnificent facade, its moving pomp of worship, its mitres and tiaras, its councils and confessions, its sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, nor in anything else of this kind, but in its witness of the spirit of Christ, as the voice of the one in the wilderness, calling ever unto men, hurrying on, to pause and reflect, to repent and be reborn ; protesting as alien force against the world's life, its culture and civilization, and its tower of Babel ; it is a witness to the faith and as the faithful among the faithless (can it be said now ?) that the Church is the Body of the Lord, His vicar, the moving shadow and representative on earth of those realities that live in the eternal realm.³³

Chakkarai could not think of the Indian Christian community organizing itself into a huge federation or even unions. 'The Indian David cannot fight in the armour and with the sword, of Saul.'

Chakkarai's ecclesiology begins with the experience of Jesus Christ. For him it is not organization or theological system which is important, but rather our unity in Christ. The Church as it is developed in the west is purely a historical product of certain ages brought about by the particular circumstances in Europe. An

³³ G. V. Job, (ed.), *Rethinking Christianity in India*, p. 122.

Indian Christian need not enthuse over it. The Church in India must begin with its own characteristic Christian experience and should develop its form. 'Life must form its own body, water of life must cut its own channel.'³⁴

Toyohiki Kagawa of Japan, was a well known Christian leader in Asia in the first half of this century. The Cross of Jesus Christ was the centre of his theology.³⁵ 'He saw it as the end of the movement of life from God's heart into man's misery, evoking and strengthening now the counter-movement of man rising from sleep and semi-consciousness into what he called the full or cosmic consciousness of a life in Christ which will bring about God's Kingdom . . . This counter-movement is man's participation in God's self-sacrifice, first was continuously sent out to the frontiers. We must carry on the purifying work of the blood by going into the streets where the rogues live, and living with them ; we must mingle with the prostitute women ; we must make friends with the criminals, restoring and healing as the blood does, until crime disappears. For this process of healing both witness to God's atoning love in Christ and costly service through participation in God's self-offering love for the world, are necessary.'³⁶ Coming from the centre of the Cross, Kagawa had to become both an evangelist and a social reformer. Very soon, he realized that curative social work was not enough, but that the social and economic structures of the society had to be changed. 'In the midst of hard facts of this *oikoumene*, he saw the *oikoumene* to come, and this kept hope for this world.'

With regard to Kagawa's ecclesiology, Hans-Reudi Weber writes :

On the way to the centre, the Cross, and from there to his costly involvement in the affairs of this world, Kagawa found the Church. Yet it does not look like the Church of most missionaries and Church leaders. He saw it as a movement rather than an institution, a leaven than a building, a brother-

³⁴ See T. V. Philip, 'Chakkarai and the Indian Church', in *Society and Religion*, Madras : C.I.S.R.S. — C.L.S., 1976, pp. 153-165.

³⁵ Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Asia and Ecumenical Movement (1895-1961)*, S.C.M. Press, 1966, pp. 193-194.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

hood in everyday life rather than Christ's body in sacramental worship.³⁷

Chenchiah, Chakkarai and Kagawa were men of the last generation. Yet, there is a certain continuity in the trend of their ecclesiological thinking and of the present-day developments in Asia.

In recent years, all throughout Asia, there is a growing emphasis on the theology of the people and the Church as people's movement. In 1975, the National Christian Council of India published a collection of essays under the title, *The Church : A People's Movement*.³⁸ 'Theology of the people' was the theme for the biennial council meeting³⁹ of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in 1979. The Christian Conference of Asia, in 1984, published the book, *Minjung Theology* written by a group of Korean theologians.⁴⁰ Apart from various publications, there were also a number of consultations and conferences held on the theology of the people and the theological response to realities in Asia.

In the N.C.C.I. publication, *The Church : A People's Movement*, Samuel Rayan and M. M. Thomas of India emphasise 'openness' as a fundamental characteristic of the Church. Rayan calls for an openness to various cultural and spiritual traditions and experiences in India. This he thinks will spare the Church from the mistake of absolutizing itself and its historical heritage, or posing as the only prophet and servant of God on earth. This will mean plurality of theologies and faith formulations, worship forms and ecclesial structures in India. The identity of the Church or the nature of the Church is not defined by doctrinal statements or heresy hunting, but by its ortho-praxis, by its openness to the world and by the quality and the style of its life lived as a Kenotic presence in India.

M. M. Thomas makes a distinction between faith on the one hand and culture, ideology and religion, on the other. Faith

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁸ Mathai Zachariah (ed.), *The Church : A People's Movement*, N.C.C.I., 1975.

³⁹ See *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXVIII. No. 4, 1980.

⁴⁰ Kim Yong Bock, (ed.), *Minjung Theology*, Christian Conference of Asia, 1981.

always needs to find expression in culture, ideology or religion, but these expressions always change with times and situations and have no ultimacy about them. The centrality of Christ has enlarged the areas of life in which we are released by Christ from legalism and rigidity into greater openness. The form of the Church should be such that it should make its openness to God and to the world an abiding reality. This openness enables the Church to distinguish its faith from creed, cultures and other religious symbolism in which it finds its expression. When such a distinction between faith and expressions of it, which are relative, is made, it will enable the Church to be creative, experiment with new styles of life, create new structures and establish fellowship with people who have accepted Christ but not joined the institutional church or extend fellowship to Christians in secular movements who witness to Christ in the language and issues of secular ideologies without the traditional religious symbolism. Such an openness would also raise the question of Church's recognizing the possibility of men of other religions responding to Christ in faith through their own religious symbolism.

Saral K. Chatterji, writing on 'Some Ingredients of a Theology of the People',⁴¹ raises some questions for Church and theology. Chatterji is very critical of the theological conceptualizations which have little relationship with the experiences of the people. Such conceptualizations have little to do with reality. He asks: 'Has faith anything to do with reality?' 'This is essentially a question whether faith relates to the every day life-experience of the people, their situation in poverty and oppression, their hope and aspiration expressed in various forms.' He points out that abstractions and conceptualizations in theology helps neither church members nor the people outside. For example theology speaks of redemptive experience mediated through the Church. He writes:

As a theological formulation this is an abstraction for all those (the vast majority of the people) who are not within this community and can never appropriate it. It follows that this particular reality of faith has no relationship with the realities of existence of the people. At the same time, the 'faithful' find no adequate means in their theology for

⁴¹ *Religion and Society*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, 1980, pp. 3-28.

a direct link with the reality of the people. Thus, for the members of the community of faith also such formulations become abstractions and there follows a loss or diminution of reality.⁴²

The problem pointed out by Chatterji about our understanding of theology equally applies also to our understanding of the Church. Chatterji continues :

The reality of the community of faith or of redemptive experience point to the reality of Jesus as the historic redeemer of the people. And this in its turn leads us to what we may consider as the irreducible elements of this reality : Jesus among the people, the people who were poor, captive, without hope, outcaste and oppressed ; he had compassion for them which refers to the fact that his ministry was one of deep fellowship with the people in their suffering ; and his action was one of solidarity with the people shown on the cross, as well as one of redemption and liberation of the totality of the people through his resurrection. Jesus and the people are therefore inseparable realities of the world of faith.⁴³

Then he asks the question, ' Are the oppressed people who may not be part of the community of faith as we conceive of it, participants in the *ecclesia* ? ' But the purport of this dimension of faith is that the people with whom Jesus establishes a relationship of liberation cannot be left out of our fellowship and, therefore, are a part of the *ecclesia*.⁴⁴ The community which Jesus has saved cannot be a closed one. This is a stream where there are no dams to block or regulate the free flow of life-giving water. This is an *ecclesia* with no boundaries. ' The tendency has been to create a closed community by insisting that " salvation " can be had only within the exclusive club of cardholders. This has denied Christ's direct relationship with the millions of the oppressed people.' What is apparent in this discussion is : Is salvation within the institutional Church or is the Church where salvation takes place ?

For the Korean theologians, the Minjung theology is people's theology as lived and experienced by them. The Minjung are the

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

permanent reality of history. Kingdoms, dynasties and states rise and fall, but the Minjung remain as a concrete reality in history. For them, Minjung (the People) cannot be conceptualized. It signifies living reality, dynamic, complex and changing. This living reality defines its own existence and generates new acts and dramas in history. 'The identity and reality of the Minjung is known not by a philosophical or scientific definition of their essence or nature, but rather through their own stories—their social biographies which the Minjung themselves create and therefore can tell best.'⁴⁵ The story of the Minjung 'entails an historical understanding which regards them as subjects—not as objects—of their own story and destiny'⁴⁶ What does this mean for our ecclesiological understanding? Can the Church be known by a philosophical or theological definition or concept? If the Minjung reality is known only through its experience, its biography, its story, its hope and suffering, how do we understand the reality of the Church? If the 'Minjung' signifies a living reality which is dynamic, changing and complex and if this living reality defines its own existence, can the Church which is the *koinonia* of the people, define itself in terms of inherited structures, hierarchy, dogmas and symbols? What is Church history? Is it the history of hierarchy and structures which reduce the story of the people into an appendix to their history? What is continuity and 'apostolic' succession in the Church?

In Minjung theology, there is a 'unification of God and revolution' and the unification will be achieved in the form of the Minjung Church. Suh Nam Dong observes :

In the post-Christian era, the Minjung church and Minjung theology attempt to deal simultaneously with the purification of the person, which is the realm of freedom, and the humanization of the social structure, which is the realm of necessity. It is, as Kim Chi-ha perceives, 'the unification of God and revolution.' The unification will be achieved in the form of the Minjung Church. It will come into being neither as an accident nor as a supernatural event. It will not be brought about by heroes or the elite through their ideology.

⁴⁵ Kim Yong Bock, in *Minjung Theology*, p. 186.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Rather, this unification will be achieved by the Minjung themselves through their wisdom, conviction and courage.⁴⁷

Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka defines Asian theology as a discovery rather than an invention, i.e., 'as a Christian participation in and a Christic explication of all that happens at the deepest zone of the Asian ethos where religiosity and poverty, each in its liberative dimension, coalesce to forge a common front against Mammon, the Anti-God.'⁴⁸ In any Asian theology, according to Pieris, both the religious (cultural) situation and the situation of poverty needs to be taken into account. It is at this point Pieris questions the value of western liberation theology for Asia. For him, Asian theology should have a unitary perception of religion and revolution. 'Revolution could turn reactionary, religion become irreligious. But the foundation of a third world theology of religion remains unshaken, namely, that it is the revolutionary impulse which constitutes and, therefore, defines the essence of homoreligiosus.'⁴⁹

Pieris points out that the Christian *kerygma* revolves round three words: *basileia* (the New Order), *metanoia* (interior conversion of that order), and *martyrion* (overt commitment to it). The new order cannot be described or defined but we can only strive towards it by negating the present order not only in theory and analysis, but also in the actual commitment to overthrow it. *Metanoia* is a religiously motivated desire to move towards the new humanity, a cultural revolution. *Martyrion* is the concomitant growth of collective testimony in the communities of the converts, who are a personalized anticipation and visible guarantee of the new order. 'Like the supreme martyr, Jesus, they too are the victim-judge of the existing system, and the paradigm of the future they announce. This incipient structural revolution is known as the Church, which is the good news to the poor, because the poor by birth and the poor by option constitute it.'⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴⁸ Aloysius Pieris, S.J., 'The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of a Third-World Theology', C.T.C. Bulletin, Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, August 1982, p. 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Today, there is a growing number of ecumenically committed Christian groups throughout Asia which are on the frontiers, struggling for the rights of the people, engaged in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation and searching for a human community in an alienated world. Their stand goes beyond the ecclesiological understandings of the traditional churches to those deeper human realities of sin, suffering and alienation. About them M. M. Thomas writes,

The Korean leaders in the struggle against the Park regime spoke of an invisible *koinonia*, across traditional barriers to fellowship, (which they experienced in their suffering. Striving alongside others for human rights in Korea faced the small groups 'with a new kind of spiritual community' in the words of Kim Kwan Sunk. There was in this also 'a new sense of communication' with the vast majority of silent people, Christians and otherwise and a sense of 'majority complex' resulting from the solidarity with the people of God and Jesus Christ across national and ideological frontiers. We experience the emergence of an invisible ecclesia which is transforming historical reality and is introducing a new reality in our land.⁵¹

Thomas points out,

Many such fellowships in Asia are struggling in agony (and silence, yet somehow they provide a pervasive sign of hope for the community of tomorrow. Not only the groups of radical social change, but also clergy fellowships and theological groups committed to ecumenical evangelism, and others have the same vision of invisible *koinonia*; it is a real—if partial—realization of ecumenical vision of the *Una Sancta*. However momentary, it is what sustains them... It may be difficult to fit into ecclesiology.⁵²

None of these Asian theologians we have mentioned, worked out an Asian ecclesiology as such. But in their writings we see a new trend in understanding the Church. All of them move away

⁵¹ M. M. Thomas, 'Ecumenism in Asia: an assessment' in *Voices of Unity*, World Council of Churches, 1981, p. 100. See also, Ron O'Grady, *Bread and Freedom*, W.C.C., 1979.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

from the understanding of the Church as an institution. The emphasis is on the people, their commitment and participation. For Chenchiah and Chakkarai, the Kingdom of God has central place in the Gospel. The Church is the fellowship (nerve centre) of Christians engaged in the transformation of the world towards the new creation. It takes place in the stream of life and is best expressed in the spirit filled fellowships. Kagawa saw the Church as a movement, a counter movement of man's participation in the movement of God's self-sacrificing love for the world. Rayan, Thomas and Chatterji speak of the openness of the Church with plurality of theology, faith symbols and structures ; the boundary of which is larger than the institutional church. For the Korean theologians the Church is the unification of God and revolution. Aloysius Pieris speaks of the Church as structural revolution. Different frontier groups experience the emergence of an invisible *ecclesia* which is transforming the historical reality and is introducing a new history. A Consultation on Theological Tradition in India, which met in November 1981 at Bangalore⁵³ called for Christian involvement in the struggles and hopes of the poor and then stated :

The self-defining of the Church is a process that must go on and never ceases. It (Church) is now in the process of becoming itself, and it becomes itself in the measure of its fidelity to God's mission to the poor of this land. We need not therefore be too pre-occupied with the structures of the old ecclesiastical establishment but concentrate on the Church that is on the way, emerging where traditional sources and the people in the struggle meet.⁵⁴

Like the early Church, the Asian Christians experience the Church (the *koinonia*) as they participate in the movement of God's redemptive love in the world. The Church comes as a discovery. It emerges and is becoming. The point is that we bring neither the people into the Church nor the Church into the world, but experience the Church in the stream of life. There is no need to create a theology of laity to bridge the gulf between the ecclesiastical establishment and the world, as it is done today. The Church

⁵³ Organized by the Christian Conference of Asia.

⁵⁴ Report of the Consultation.

is discovered on the way, in life situations. Its experience is not defined *apriori*. It evolves its own form and structure. Life must form its own body, the water of life must cut its own channel. The ecclesiastic power structures does not make the Church. 'The orange robe does not make a *sanyasi*. It is experience behind it that creates it.'

The Church is *koinonia* (participation). The Church 'emerges' and is experienced as we participate in the life of God and in the life of the people, and in participation we understand what it means to be a Church in Asia.

PERSPECTIVES OF A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

JYOTSNA CHATTERJI

In our country the concern for women has taken several forms. It has been expressed, for instance, in 'feminist terms', "that all women's contributions are valid and that women should work in their own way, in their own place and time. They will thus move towards self-growth and contribute towards the struggles of all women".¹ Thus has developed a tendency to believe that the major expression of women's liberation should be through the provision of services and position for women in all spheres, equal pay for equal work, and a better status in the existing system without changing the system itself.

Another, perhaps the most common of all the forms, is service or relief oriented programmes, whether voluntary or governmental, for women aiming at rehabilitation, employment, skill-formation, health, etc. A third form is a variation of the feminist form which takes up certain symptoms of the existing structural factors including capitalist values which use women for advertising and profit-making. Yet another form is the exclusive attention to legal and social matters related to women. Finally, the Churches in India which have women's organisations confine themselves to the so-called 'spiritual' matters and relief services. The common feature of all these forms is the fact that these are dominated by more or less the privileged sections of women, those who are educationally, socially, culturally and economically quite distinct from women of the less privileged sections. A comprehensive movement of women is yet to emerge in this country which is capable of promoting a solidarity of all sections of women. We need to examine the reasons for this and to evolve the perspectives required to help forge such a movement. From the point of view of the Joint Women's Programme an attempt at a theoretical understanding of the situation of women in India and formation of such a perspective for action are extremely important.

¹ ———, Women's Liberation—search for a theoretical framework, *How*, vol. 5. No. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1982, p. 7.

Women are a part of society and therefore as the society is divided so are they. These divisions are according to castes and classes. These caste-class differences determine the gulf that exists between different sections of women.

This is borne out by the facts and figures that we come across in the various studies and census figures. In every field whether it is education, employment, income, etc. these facts show that among women who are generally in a position of disadvantage because of their sex, the women of scheduled castes and tribes are worse off compared to women of the upper castes. Moreover as the Joint Women's Programme (JWP) studies show participation of women of the disprivileged sections in local organisations, Mahila Mandals etc. is much less than that of the more privileged sections among women. According to the study on the 'Status of Rural Women in India,' "among the Hindus the vast majority have absolutely no participation in the activities of the social organisations excepting in the case of schools where only 40 % do not participate". In the case of Muslim women "in two organisations namely village panchayats and Mahila Mandals, there is 100 % non-participation. It is also found that the scheduled caste women have a more negative attitude towards these organisations compared to the upper caste women".² The different sections of women therefore live in different worlds with virtually no communication among them. Educational and employment opportunities, technological advance, social cultural development among women have been monopolised by those belonging to the privileged sections. The atrocities on women and the sexual exploitation of women are also perpetrated in this country to a greater extent among the women of the scheduled castes and tribes.

Women's struggle therefore is to a large extent a part of the caste-class struggle of the oppressed in general. This follows from the above-mentioned elements of our understanding. Our experiences in women's organisations in the grass roots shows that women have a definite contribution to make in this general struggle and that the women's own struggle gets sustenance and strength from the struggle of the community as a whole.

² Mumtaz Ali Khan and Noor Ayesha, *Status of Rural Women in India*, Uppal Publishing House, 1982, pp. 128-29 (A Joint Women's Programme—WCSRC Publication).

The struggle of women's groups for land rights both in urban and rural areas, their participation in the movement of slum dwellers, the struggle of tribal women against atrocities and exploitation are not only their struggle as women but for the whole community in which both women and men cooperate.

In the economic sphere we find discriminatory wages, unfavourable working conditions, unequal job opportunities and exploitation of women in unorganised sectors. The attitudes of society in India regarding unmarried women, widows, divorced women and certain categories of women workers such as nurses also typify the inferior status given to women.

The fourth element in our theoretical analysis is the self-understanding of women of the oppressed sections. The prevailing culture of domination has produced a distorted self-identity and self-understanding in which women of these sections, according to our study on the 'Status of Rural Women in India', consider their participation in community development and life as totally irrelevant and unproductive. It brings out the attitude of the rural poor women who are not willing to utilize the opportunities of education and are not anxious to send their daughters to school. This leads to the strengthening of the other element of our model related to the existing inequality and divisions among women. In the case of the privileged sections of women who are members of different professions like law, medicine, teaching, civil service, engineering, etc. a similar reluctance to active participation in the professional organisations, though for entirely different reasons, has been noted by another of our studies. The study on 'Women in Organised Movements', reveals the fact that women doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, government officials do not participate in the decision-making processes of their own professions.³ They do not see themselves as leaders of organisations which have been formed for their rights. They do not think it necessary even though they are aware of the oppression. This attitude was seen to have a high correlation with the upper caste and class background of the women interviewed in this study. Thus the same factors of

³ A. S. Seetharamu, *Women in Organised Movements*, Ambika Publications, 1981 (A Joint Women's Programme and WCSRC Publication).

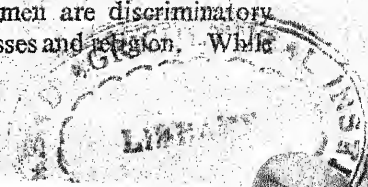
caste and class effect the two diametrically opposite sections of women.

While women's struggle must be a part of the oppressed in general, women also have to fight against exploitation and discrimination based on sex. This is a concern which touches all sections of women irrespective of religion, caste or ethnic identities. This is an area of general and universal subjugation of and discrimination against women justified and strengthened by all religious institutions, social and cultural values and practices and norms of behaviour. In India this aspect of oppression of women has taken the form of dowry, unjust laws in relation to inheritance, divorce, custody of child and numerous discriminatory rules and practices. This also includes such customary arrangements whereby women are confined to the home and kitchen and also behind the purdah.

Finally the above elements of our analysis point towards the need for a comprehensive struggle for women's liberation in the context of our society. These contexts emphasize the structural nature of women's question and, as the different elements of these structures are interdependent such as castes and class, the women's struggle must also have multiple thrusts. This is the basic reason why the women's movement mentioned in the beginning of this paper, in themselves, will remain partial and inadequate.

While this is understood and programmes with different sections of women are strengthened it is now necessary to promote a common platform for women to take up issues which are common to all categories of women. Women can be and should be brought together on the specifically women's questions. Last year the JWP had launched a movement against dowry and had attempted to bring women of all religions, classes and castes, of the ten states where it works. Another example of this common platform was the attempt of the JWP to build up a consensus on the question of women and the law. Twenty thousand signatures from all sections of women from all parts of India were collected as an expression of a common struggle of all women. In the coming years we need to stress such common struggles of women as women.

The existing laws with regard to women are discriminatory and affect women of all sections, castes, classes and religion. While



the constitution provides for equal rights, it is not so in practice. The marriage laws are unjust so are the laws with regard to inheritance, adoption, custody of children etc. The recommendations sent by us to the Law Commission are (1) uniform personal law for all people ; (2) registration of all marriages ; (3) change in the laws of divorce, maintenance, custody of children ; (4) make the giving and taking of dowry and rape cognisable and punishable offences. These cover areas that affect all women and can become the ground for a common struggle.

Protests by women's organisations including the Joint Women's Programme has led the government to be concerned about the legal status of women and several subcommittees of the law commission like the Subcommittees on Rape, on Dowry, on Divorce and custody of children have been formed to study and recommend amendments to the existing laws. Women's Organisations have come together nationally in New Delhi to run legal cells for women in distress. In the State level also Voluntary Action Bureaus have been formed in two States including Karnataka. Both in New Delhi and in Karnataka the Joint Women's Programme is co-operating in these efforts. The problems mentioned above touch the lives of women and families and cut across religions, castes and classes. It is our experience with people in the slums and the rural areas that the question of family and legal rights of women are of fundamental importance to the poorer and weaker sections of women as they are among the more affluent and educated sections. Our study on *The Problem of Dowry in Bangalore City* proves that dowry is a practice that has affected people of all economic categories though the problem is more noticeable among the middle and higher income groups.⁴ Another study goes to show that both the educated and the uneducated tend to pay dowry even though the educated are more vocal in condemning it.⁵ All these factors indicate that there are areas in which women can come together for a common struggle for justice.

For this purpose a deeper study and reflection are needed and also a greater probing into the obstacles that stand in the way of a

⁴ Krishnakumari, N. S. and Geetha, A. S., *The Problem of dowry—its study in Bangalore* (A Joint Women's Programme Report).

⁵ Shantah, N., *A Study of the Returns from Education to Employed Women in Bangalore City*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1982.

common struggle. Simultaneously with women's struggle against economic and other social injustices and discriminations we have to tackle the question of religious institutions and authorities which perpetuate women's subjugation. It is these religious authorities which have consistently opposed transformation in values and laws which can free women from their bondage in the personal as well as social spheres. The opposition to the proposal for a common civil code for instance come from religious institutions and leaders, Muslims, Christians and Parsees. Women's organisations and the Joint Women's Programme in particular will have to plan a movement challenging these religious values and norms as well as authorities who enforce them.

The foregoing analysis leads us to explore the possibilities of closer networks than what has been achieved so far within the JWP, and with other genuine and committed groups concerned with the women's question.

A women's comprehensive movement however cannot be separated either from the community as a whole or from the ethnic, cultural, economic, social and other diversities which make up the realities of society. Our understanding of women's struggle as part of the general struggle of the oppressed needs to be translated and concretised into programmes which will involve women and men within a community. A women's organisation therefore should not be so exclusive as to avoid contacts with men in their movement. In a society where the fight for survival and social and economic justice are the primary concern there can be no alternative to this community aspect of the women's movement.

At the same time our concern for diverse sections of women cannot be sacrificed to any other aspects of the women's question. This has been the perspective of the JWP from the very beginning and it is related to the first element of our theoretical understanding of the women's situation in our country. Therefore the JWP has tried to work with different sections of women. We realise the need to deepen our understanding of this diversity in the women's situation through not only involvement but also studies and research. In fact it is in this area that our studies and research have played an important part and pioneering role. Our selection of study subjects have so far been guided by this need to know more

about the different sections of women such as Devadasis, Prostitutes, Nurses, Rural Women, Women Workers in unorganised Industries and the role of women in professions. In the coming years many more such studies will be necessary.

A distinctive feature of our study programme has been their relationship to action. Our attempt at a theoretical understanding mentioned above for instance, is derived from the JWP's direct involvement in action. Yet, we are still groping for an adequate understanding of this relationship between study and action. Some studies have helped existing action, others have given rise to it. We realize that, this problem is part of the larger problem of theory and praxis, the unity of which is our goal.

Insofar as JWP has a Christian foundation we see this unity in Jesus Christ. Therefore we have tried to share the Good News of Jesus for the oppressed and particularly women with all others including Christian women. It must be made clear at this point that this foundation does not make the programme in anyway subject to any religious organisation. Both the structures of society and those of religious organisations including the Christian Churches have to be critically examined by women and those which are not in consonance with the women's notion of dignity, justice and liberation must be fought against or ignored. To this end the JWP must engage in social as well as theological analysis of the structures of domination both in the Religious Institutions and the Society on the one hand and the meaning of the process of new life and hope on the other.

STILL CUTTING : RUMINATIONS OVER THE CISRS AFTER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

RICHARD W. TAYLOR

The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS called Scissors) was inaugurated on October 5, 1957 at St. Christopher's Training College, Madras, by a joint meeting of the Commission on the Centre for Research and Training of the National Christian Council of India (NCCI), the Council of the Christian Institute for the Study of Society (CISS) and representatives appointed by Churches, Institutions and All-India Christian Organizations. Its first Chairman was Principal David G. Moses of Hislop College, Nagpur. Paul D. Devanandan was the founding Director. M. M. Thomas was his Associate Director. The first Biennial Council of the CISRS met in Nagpur in December, 1958 at the NCCI. All of our early Biennial Council meetings were held there. Once, in the late 1960s, I guess, when the train stopped running in the South, probably because of anti-Hindi riots, M. M. Thomas, E. V. Mathew and others had to come to Nagpur from Bangalore for a Biennial Council meeting by taxi. Some of our Gandhian colleagues thought this an excessive expense.

But the decision to have a CISRS seems to have been made in Nagpur in February, 1957. Devanandan, known to all his colleagues as 'Doc', was in New York City during 1956 teaching at Union Theological Seminary. The work of the NCCI Commission on the Centre for Research and Training went on and it became clear that Devanandan would be the first director of what has sometimes been called 'the Christian Centre for the Study of Hinduism—in process of formation.' In 1982, during a house-cleaning in the CISRS headquarters (Devanandan House), I discovered a diary that Devanandan had kept in New York during the autumn semester of 1956.¹ It is clear from this that he was spending a good deal of his time talking with scholars and ecume-

¹ This diary has now been deposited in the Devanandan collection of the archives of the U.T.C. library, Bangalore.

nical leaders about the programme of the study centre to which he was planning to return. Probably he talked with them about finance as well. In February 1957 in Nagpur the NCCI Executive met to consider the report of its Commission on the Centre for Research and Training. I believe that the Commission met then too. But they did not meet alone. A group of the leadership of the CISS met with them. It was then that the merger of the study of society with the study of Hinduism was finally decided upon. Most of the group from the CISS dined with us one evening and stayed on until 1 a.m. discussing the pros and cons of the merger. These included H.F.J. (Harry) Daniel, M. M. Thomas, J. Russell Chandran, K. J. Abraham and probably A. P. Barnabas.² There were two basic reasons for the merger. One was more theoretical. It was that those of us already engaged in studies of society had come to realize that we needed help in understanding Hindu values and the other Hindu bases of the style and structure of Indian society if we were to progress in our socially concerned studies. The other reason, equally important, was very personal. It was simply that 'Doc' Devanandan was known and trusted as one uniquely devoted to encouraging younger men to do their own thing by encouraging their thinking and writing, engaging in dialogue with them, helping them to publish—and protecting them to do this work. He had already done this for most of the members of the CISS. As I later got to know him I came to believe that he was one of the finest teachers in this regard I have ever worked with.

The outcome was that the February meeting of the NCCI Executive authorized Devanandan to negotiate the merger. In March the Committee for Literature on Social Concerns was merged into the CISS with Devanandan as President, Harry Daniel as Vice-President, K. J. Abraham as Secretary and M. M. Thomas as Honorary Director. Devanandan and Thomas took over as editors of the *Bulletin of the CISS*. With the founding of the

² At that time I was toward the end of my second year in India teaching Sociology in Nagpur and was working with M. M. Thomas in the 'Bombay follow-up' programme and with Harry Daniel in the Student Christian Movement of India. We had known both of them since 1947 meetings of the World's Student Christian Federation.

CISRS the *Bulletin* became *Religion and Society*.³ The name Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society seems to have been the suggestion of J. Russell Chandran. Eventually it was to be described as the most productive 'Christian Think Tank' in the Third World. This was certainly in some important part due to the fact that it was wholly founded by Indians. In most other places somewhat similar organizations seem to have started largely by foreign missionaries. Besides, many of our founders were a rather special kind of Indian Christian—they were nationalists to a very large extent. Several of them had indianised the more western names they were born to. Devanandan had. He was Paul David when he did his B.D. studies at the Pacific School of Religion—and also during his Ph.D. programme at Yale as far as I can determine. Later he added the much more Indian Devanandan. Of course M. M. Thomas has often been teased for his Welsh name. But in reality it is very different. After the Syrian Christian use (which is like that of the South Indian Brahmin) his brothers include M. M. Cherian, M. M. John and M. M. Ninan.

I will not deal here with the development of ideas throughout the first twenty-five years of the Institute. Dozens of doctoral theses have already been written about the thought of the Institute and its directors. Some of these have been excellent. Others are bad beyond belief. On the society side of the enterprise the books by Bengt R. Hoffman and by Godwin Shiri are pretty thorough.⁴ The style we developed was special. It involved getting men and women of knowledge and ability together on topics of interest and concern to the Institute on an interdisciplinary and interfaith basis—with some of them writing papers in preparation for or presentation at the consultation. Many of these were younger college or university lecturers. Some were theologically trained. Some came from other professions. Most were Christians. The consultation, typically, involved presentations, stimulating dialogic discussion—at which both Devanandan and M. M. Thomas were

³ For this history see the 'Introduction' to Richard W. Taylor (ed.), *Religion and Society: The First Twenty-five Years, 1953-1978*, Madras: CISRS-CLS, 1982.

⁴ Bengt R. Hoffman, *Christian Social Thought in India: 1947-1962*, Bangalore: CISRS, 1967. Godwin Shiri, *Christian Social Thought in India: 1962-1977*, Madras: CISRS-CLS, 1982.

remarkably good—working groups with reports revised by the whole consultation and finally consensual statements. It was sometimes suggested in jest that M. M. Thomas arrived at some of these consultations with the final consensual statement already prepared. He did not. But his role was often so important that may be they could have. Sometimes topics seemed so important that following a consultation a group-written book would be developed and then finalized at a writing party. Some of the papers from each consultation, and some of the reports, were usually published in *Religion and Society*. After the middle 1960s consensus was no longer expected.⁵ Participants were specifically invited. Early on we found that if we asked colleges, churches and institutions to nominate participants we tended to get the most ordinary people. This meant that much staff time was devoted to beating the bushes for able people. And in learning who could work with whom—and who could not. It still is. It is this aspect of our style that made Russell Chandran's sage observation that the CISRS is not an organization but a movement, seem so right.

There were two unexpected side-effects of this style—sort of bonuses. One was that some bright young college lecturers were kept intellectually alive through stimulation that they did not get in their own colleges. Friends in the University Grants Commission observed this and tried to replicate it. Which is one reason that in course of time there were so many consultations being done by others that we did fewer of them. The other bonus was that some Christian lecturers whose theological education ended with Sunday School and who may not have been very interested in the Church started reading theology in relation to the questions we raised and began to take the Church as represented by the CISRS more seriously.

Our consultations have never been all work and no fun. This is in the tradition of Devanandan who had a puckish sense of humour. Once when travelling to Nagpur by train for a consultation on peace, he picked up one of the common posters of a

⁵ Cf. Richard W. Taylor, 'From Consensus to Controversy: Christian Literature on Social Questions in India in the last Twenty-five Years' in *Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 25, Nos. 3 & 4 (July-December 1976).

snake-bite curer in South India. This curer had repeated an anti-snake-bite *mantra* so often that if one were bitten by a snake one had only to send him a telegram (he had a registered telegraphic address), to be cured by an appropriate application of his treasury of *mantras*. Upon arrival in Nagpur nothing would satisfy Devanandan but that one of my former students who was running a printing press replicate the snake-bite poster substituting the name of K. K. Chandy the distinguished absolute pacifist leader of the Christavashram. When this was passed out along with some of the papers for discussion the next day everyone thought it pretty funny—except Chandyji.

Our style of individual and small-group study and research was also different and also involved beating the bushes for the right people. That is because it was largely person-oriented rather than programme-oriented. We had and have many things both on paper and in our heads that we would like to have studied. But, by and large, instead of programming specific things and then picking up whoever may be available to do the work for that particular programme we have rather picked up promising and concerned people and encouraged them to study what they particularly wanted to study. This has, I venture to think, led to rather more creativity. Usually we have also tried to surround such researchers with a support group for consultation and advice.

Our study and research has been person-oriented in another sense too. We have tended to insist that the people or groups to be studied be taken into confidence and consulted as to what they think is important in their situation and as to what they think the questions really are. This seems sound as well as humane social science. But as late as the early 1980s we found colleague social scientists from some other leading social science research institutes around India, with whom we were working on a study of Harijan Elite under a common grant from the Indian Council for Social Science Research, quite loath to follow this style—rather preferring to ask only the questions that *they* thought important. I suppose that it was this style in part that led us to realize earlier than most, the continuing importance of caste as over against economic class in the oppression of vast groups of people throughout India. No doubt our interest in religion in society and our

cynicism toward doctrinaire marxian scholasticism also aided us to this conclusion. To which we were led largely by Saral K. Chatterji.

On the religion side of the enterprise the ongoing search was for Hindu dialogue partners as well as for scholarly collaborators—Christians and others. On Devanandan's first trip to North India after becoming Director he based himself with us at Rajpur for some days.⁶ From there I took him to meet Hindu friends in the holy towns of Haridwar and Rishikesh. We met Swami Sivananda at his Ashram in Rishikesh. When Devanandan told Sivanandaji what we were up to, Sivanandaji's face lit up and he said that of course he would be interested in inter-religious dialogue and that he had been in such a meeting before, in Saharanpur.⁷ Saharanpur had been one of Stanley Jones' religious Round Table Conferences for sharing religious experience and understanding. Fact is, when the Centre for the Study of Hinduism was in the process of formation Sivanandaji read about it in the *National Christian Review* and wrote to the NCCI inviting them to locate their Centre in the Forest University which he was then setting up in his Ashram. That would have been interesting! Sivanandaji's Ashram later became an important dialogue partner for and encourager of many Christian ashramites in various parts of India. Be that as it may, so quick was Devanandan, and open, that he came away from our time with Sivanandaji realizing that in addition to intellectual theological inter-religious dialogue he and the whole CISRS would also have to try to take religious experience more seriously than we had been inclined to do. In Rishikesh and Haridwar Devanandan introduced himself as a 'Christian missionary'. I was surprised. I should not have been.

Those were ill fated years for finding people to be of help on the religion side. They were the years of the extraordinary growth in the study and teaching of religions in North America. Any bright, able, critically oriented Indian Hinduist constantly got

⁶ At Devanandan's urging we were then minding the shop at the Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur, Dehra Dun which for some years was a major base of operation for the CISRS in North India.

⁷ For more on this cf. Richard W. Taylor, *The Contribution of E. Stanley Jones*, Madras : CISRS-CLS, 1973, p. 10.

North American job offers. From our core group of Christian Hinduists we lost John Arapura, Herbert Jai Singh, Nalini Devdas and a host of younger people. And a number of our closest Hindu Hinduist friends also left—including the only two Hindus who were then very interested in organizing meetings for inter-religious dialogue of our sort. Most other Hindus gladly participated in the meetings we organized but did not respond by organizing others themselves. We also lost our brilliant first foreign staff member, John B. Carman, to North America.

When the agreed time for me to join the CISRS full-time came, in 1961, a decision about our location had to be made. Several friends felt that it would be unwise to concentrate the whole staff so far south as Bangalore. M. M. Thomas and I had studied the list of several hundred people we had managed to involve in various aspects of the Bombay follow-up programme⁸ and realized that Eastern India and North-Eastern India were underrepresented. This is one reason that it was decided to locate us at Serampore College. Another reason was that Devanandan, typically, was concerned about the several very able Indian theological teachers there who felt that they were being stifled by the foreign missionary staff of the college. He hoped that we might be able to mediate a more constructive relationship there. We failed. He also saw some advantage in having someone on the spot to relate to the Senate of Serampore College which is the heart of the protestant and orthodox theological university for all of India. Also, it has always been an important part of the CISRS task to be of help to theological colleges—when asked. No doubt our being at Serampore was intended to give expression to this too. With Serampore as a base we were able to be of more help to tribal friends both in North East India and in Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas. In the first CISRS consultation we arranged for Bengal one of the new faces was Saral K. Chatterji.

From the beginning the word religion in our CISRS name has meant contemporary Hinduism in all of its widely varied manifestations. On the whole it still does. Several times in the early

⁸ Summarized in M. M. Thomas and P. D. Devanandan (eds.), *Christian Participation in Nation Building*, Bangalore: NCCI & CISRS, 1960, which Thomas compiled while staying with us in Rajpur for a month or so.

years Devanandan was asked to incorporate what is now the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) with its special concern for Indian Islam, into the CISRS. He always refused on the ground that it was missionary-society founded and still dominated by foreign missionaries and others more interested in conversions than in understanding. We have tried over the years to be of help and encouragement to the HMI and to stay out of their field which is so important to much of Indian society and politics.⁹ However the vacuum of Christian concern with Indian Muslim *society* has become so large and of such long standing that we are increasingly trying to take it seriously ourselves.

Later we were able to be of help and encouragement to Ram Singh in the founding and building up of a Christian Institute of Sikh Studies in Batala in the Punjab. Here we have had the pleasure of a creative relationship and the joy of seeing it flourish.

Devanandan's heart finally stopped in the Dehra Dun railway station as he was arriving for a consultation at the Rajpur Centre in 1962. He had been warned frequently that this was bound to happen if he continued the pace he had set himself in getting the CISRS going. He intentionally continued in order to get it going. He got it going extraordinarily well. M. M. Thomas, whom Devanandan had groomed, was everyone's choice to become the next Director. Almost a year later a stranger came upon M. M. Thomas, T. S. Wilkinson and me, carrying on an ordinary CISRS core-group discussion. The stranger was frightened because he thought we were shouting at each other. We were not, really. It was just that in that group we had been accustomed to speak loudly because Devanandan was somewhat deaf. M. M. Thomas continued to live in Kerala, but spent about half of every month in Bangalore at our headquarters which we named Devanandan House.

Because of who our founders were we have always been interested in encouraging the doing of Indian Christian Theology. Gradually, it seems to me, this became our third major focus—along with religion and society. To further this we have two

⁹ Even when Herbert Jai Singh, the ablest Indian Christian Islamicist, was our Associate Director he carefully devoted all of his time to the study of Indian religions other than Islam.

series of books. The Indian Christian Thought series permits individuals to write about their own theological development. The Confessing the Faith in India series, first encouraged by D. T. Niles as part of an East Asia Christian Conference study, examines various contributions to theological thought—past and present. Much of this concern has involved re-exposing very stimulating Indian thinking about Jesus by Christians and others, which was sternly put down by most missionaries and the church people trained by them—until rather recently.

As we published more and more books on religion, society and theology we realized that we were not very good at distributing and selling them. So we entered into an agreement with the Christian Literature Society (CLS) whereby they became our publishers. This useful and happy relationship began with sharing the time of T. K. Thomas, who had been of great editorial help to us already, as a common member of both our staffs. The selling part of this arrangement continues to be of great help to us. However the English Publications Department of the CLS seems to have become moribund so that our books are running three years behind. We and our researchers and our library subscribers are finding this very frustrating indeed.

M. M. Thomas took the position that the vocation of the CISRS was to produce ideas and that it was normally the vocation of others, particularly the churches, but not of the CISRS to put these into action. This was his usual response to the constant request of the churches to do things *for* them. This was the general staff reaction to the suggestion by the many Tamil members of the 1962 Biennial Council that the CISRS should take over editorial responsibility for *The Guardian*, the venerable Christian weekly of public opinion published from Madras, which was suffering from a lack of solid content—which it was remembered to have had earlier. Our staff position was very much that reviving *The Guardian* was important but that it was not part of our vocation and that it would distract us from our vocation. Nevertheless the Council prevailed and we took over its editorial responsibility in 1964. It became a rather exciting project and elicited remarkable thinking and writing on current events from E. V. Matthew, Ninan Koshy, J. Russell Chandran, G. R. Kamm, M. M. Thomas



and others. In the beginning E. V. Matthew, Russell Chandran, Herbert Jai Singh and Mark Sunder Rao, along with M. M. Thomas when he was in Bangalore, met weekly and decided what should be written about, and who should write it and then made suggestions of important points. It was to this fellowship that *The Guardian* owed its rapid and remarkable revival. The early years also included pseudonymous articles on religion by Mark Sunder Rao including several about his spiritual conversations with cows. This did not bother many. But at a time when M. M. Thomas and I were both on sabbatical in New York we realized that Mark was mounting a major and prolonged *Guardian* editorial attack on the senior management of the Bible Society of India. This did bother us and M. M. Thomas strongly suggested to Mark that he keep *The Guardian* out of church politics. Be that as it may, later developments seemed to prove that Mark's journalistic sense was very accurate in this instance.

St. Mark's Cathedral, Bangalore, of the Church of South India has been the parish church of the CISRS in many ways. Most of the staff worship there when in Bangalore. It is the only parish that is a member of the CISRS. Most other members are denominations, dioceses, colleges, theological colleges or all-India institutions like the YWCA and NCCI. Most of our commemoration services are held there. This is largely because one of our founders, Harry Daniel, was the first Indian presbyter-in-charge there and because his successor, Alexander D. John, was our treasurer for a number of years until he moved from Bangalore. Because of the centrality of these unusually able presbyters in the CISRS movement a number of creative things were done together. Several studies by the Industrial Team Service of St. Mark's were much aided by the CISRS.¹⁰ Herbert Jai Singh's most popular CISRS pamphlet¹¹ was first written for a series of sermons he was invited to deliver at St. Mark's. The experience of St. Mark's was frequently helpfully fed into CISRS concerns and discussions about

¹⁰ The best of these was published as Susie Oomen, *Pace of Modern Change*, Bangalore : Industrial Team Service and CISRS, 1968.

¹¹ Herbert Jai Singh, *My Neighbours*, Bangalore : CISRS, 1964 and reprinted and translated widely.

the parish church.¹² All of this led to a major study of the parish by the CISRS at the request and with the thorough involvement of the parish—still unpublished, alas! Even now when many of the earlier concerns and activities of the parish seem to have gone down the drain because of pastoral and episcopal neglect¹³ the one active group remaining in the parish, The Women's Fellowship, has been enlivened and emboldened by intensive contact with our related Joint Women's Programme. Even now some of our staff continue to be invited to preach at St. Mark's and several of the leading laymen there subscribe to our CISRS publications.

By 1969 Saral K. Chatterji was in New Delhi as a member of the CISRS staff to start our Programme on National Legislation to take the human and social values of major proposed legislation seriously. He provided a remarkable non-political forum for the discussion of such values by politicians, experts and others including a few theologians. But we were much misunderstood by Christians—both in Parliament and outside of it. They thought we should be there to lobby for the special concerns and advantages of the Christian community. We weren't. Others found this easier to understand than most of the Christians did. Others welcomed our efforts to raise questions of human values—based on Christian faith. More recently George Mathew has been in New Delhi for us, doing somewhat the same thing—and we plan an expanded programme there based on our proposed North India Centre. But I fear that many Christians still do not understand what we are up to. I find this more than a little disenchanting, although I suppose that it also reflects on our ability to communicate well enough.

Late in 1972 Saral Chatterji became Principal of Serampore College. While there he founded the William Carey Study and Research Centre (WCSRC) with M. M. Thomas as its chairman.

¹² Cf. Alexander D. John, 'A Congregation in a Pluralistic Urban Setting' in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (March 1970) and reprinted in Richard W. Taylor (ed.) *Religion and Society: The First Twenty-five Years*, Madras: CISRS-CLS, 1982; cf. also Alexander D. John, 'The Authority and Use of the Bible for Christian Action Today in the Context of the Life and Witness of a Congregation,' in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (March 1974).

¹³ More on this decline may be found in my review of the book *Signs of Hope and Justice in Religion and Society*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (December 1980).

From this have arisen a number of WCSRC-CISRS Joint Programmes. The first of these aimed at providing a network of support for some grassroots groups actively engaged in efforts to change structures of oppression of the very poor by being of help to the poor to bring about such change. We had had this concern even earlier. But we suddenly got into it in a bigger way somewhat to our surprise. Some European—ecumenical funding agencies were quite concerned that their funding of buildings and development projects had created a comfortable administrative class of experts, and some not so expert, but had been of little help to the really poor and oppressed. They asked M. M. Thomas how to remedy this. After consulting his CISRS staff, M. M. Thomas responded with the suggestion that they seek to fund small grassroot activist groups. The Europeans were so taken with this suggestion that they convened a special joint meeting and called him to address it. They adopted his suggestion and changed their style rather dramatically. Then we had to help identify such groups and to be of help and encouragement to them. This was a challenge—a welcome challenge—that enabled us to add a new style to our Institute. Our championing of action groups has been viewed askance by many of the leaders of most of the churches. They are uncomfortable with this kind of advocacy. Perhaps a few of them covet the ecumenical funds involved. Be that as it may, with this distancing from some of the churches of our root-organization the Christian Institute for the Study of Society when they felt called to a kind of activism in their time.¹⁴

While this was going on Hunter P. Mabry was leading a careful study of the CISRS—including who participated and who was served.¹⁵ This made it clear that we had been relatively neglecting the very poor, harijans, tribals and women much more than we realized or intended. Ever since we have been changing this.

M. M. Thomas decided that he would retire at the age of sixty. He was not required to do this. The CISRS had no retirement age. All staff are on term appointments and his birthday came in the middle of a term to which he had been reappointed. But

¹⁴ Cf. George M. John, *Youth Christian Council of Action : 1938-1954*, Madras, CISRS-CLS, 1972.

¹⁵ Hunter P. Mabry, 'The CISRS Today—Preliminary Report on a Self-Study' in *Biennial Council*, 1975 Bangalore : CISRS, n.d.

he felt that he should retire then, partly to set an example to the heads of churches and Christian institutions some of whom seemed to spend much of their final years of service manipulating for extensions. So a very high-powered search committee was set up to find our next Director. That committee's first choice, Saral K. Chatterji, was, after some processing, invited by our Biennial Council to take the job and he did to everyone's delight.

In retirement M. M. Thomas became Director Emeritus and did not really leave us. His continued to be our principal voice in *The Guardian* and while Saral Chatterji was in Princeton on a long-planned sabbatical year he acted again as Director. This was when the CISRS became the main Christian focus of opposition to the political Emergency—a direction set by Saral Chatterji when he had a committee of the Biennial Council draft lengthy unminuted instructions for the guidance of the Director.¹⁶ After the censor made it impossible to say what Thomas felt must be said we cyclostyled and sent his comments and other news to friends throughout India and around the world in plain envelopes. Once when news of Thomas's arrest in Kerala, misinformation thankfully, reached us we destroyed many records in Devanandan House. We were sure that our phones were tapped and our mail read. Many tensions developed. Some old friendships fell apart between those who supported the Emergency and those of us who did not—specially when some attacked us, perhaps to prove their loyalty. But on the whole we held. Only one Council member withdrew—the National Council of YMCAs. M. M. Thomas wrote a very clear letter to Bangalore offering to resign as Acting Director of the CISRS if his anti-Emergency activities were causing us too much difficulty. We had a meeting to consider advice to give him—three senior staff members and the two local members of the Executive Committee who were available. One Executive member favoured cutting Thomas off—most curious as she has continued to announce herself as more 'radical' than the rest of us. The other Executive member was not sure. All three staff members, who had most to lose I suppose, were clear that we should continue

¹⁶ Documentation of the CISRS role during the Emergency is found in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXIV, Nos. 2 & 3 (June & September 1977). Cf. Richard W. Taylor, 'Churches in India: A Moment of Untruth' in *Christianity A Moment of Untruth* in *Christianity and Crisis*, Vol. 38, No. 10 (June 26, 1978).

to support Thomas by affirmation and identification—so we did. Thereby basking in his glory too.

Upon her return from Princeton Jyostna Chatterji took charge of the new Joint Women's Programme which has burgeoned. This and some of our other joint programmes have not only been remarkable for homing in on some of the roots of oppression. They have also introduced these questions and the people involved to our other programmes as well. This is nowhere more evident than in our programme in religion under the leadership of A. M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel who has moved into studies of the religion of the ordinary people and beyond to look for religious resources for the movement of the oppressed—and taken the rest of us along with him beyond the temptation of seeing religion as only a reinforcer of the *status quo* as many of our most socially concerned colleagues have tended to do.

As more and more of our staff time was being spent on the care and feeding of activists, not a little of it in their pastoral care in their difficulties many of which were aggravated by their factionalism, it became clear that many of them were more keen than they were skilled. Saral Chatterji was involved with training in community organization in other parts of Asia but there had been such poor experience of this in India¹⁷ that it required some courage to try this route again in India. Chatterji had that courage and got the best possible trainers. Since other interested Christian groups were afraid of negative government reaction the CISRS alone sponsored them in a very low-profile programme in Bombay. It now seems clear that those who have completed that programme are working remarkably well on their return to their base places. Hopefully this may be leading to a whole new style of large people-movements helped but not led by trained activists. If this happens it will certainly be a suitable bonus to the investment of themselves by many during our first twenty-five years.

¹⁷ For more on this dismal experience see my review of the book *P.O.—towards a strategy for People's Organization in India* in *National Christian Council Review*, Vol. XCIV, No. 5 (May 1974).

